From Army Camps and Battle-Fields

Gustav Stearns

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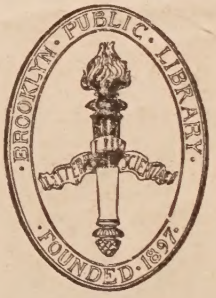

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From Army Camps and Battle-Fields

By GUSTAV STEARNS
CAPTAIN-CHAPLAIN 127th INF., 32nd DIV., A.E.F.

76 weekly letters written to Church of the Ascension, Scott and Reed Streets, Milwaukee, Wis., of which the author is the pastor and which granted him a leave of absence during the war.

With 67 Illustrations.

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CHAPLAIN GUSTAV STEARNS

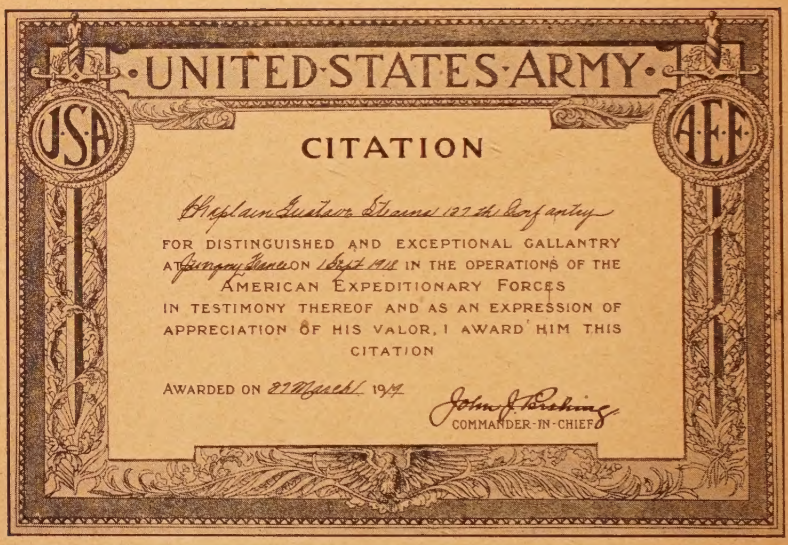
PREFACE

THE author was chaplain of the 127th Infantry, 32nd Division, American Expeditionary Forces. He was in the service over twenty-two months in the World War, fifteen months of which was overseas, and was on duty on three battle fronts in France (the Alsace trench sector, the Aisne-Marne offensive, and the Oise-Aisne offensive), and in the Army of Occupation in Germany. He was wounded by enemy shrapnel fire July 12, 1918, in Badricourt, France, and after the battle of Juvigny, September 1, 1918, he was honored for gallantry in action, receiving the highest of the three grades of citations, signed by General Pershing. He preached to over 4,000 wounded soldiers at once, and buried fifty-one fallen soldiers in one day on the battle-field, under shell-fire.

The letters were written to Church of the Ascension, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, of which the author is the pastor, and which granted him a leave of absence during the period of the war.

Some of these letters were printed in the daily papers and attracted a great deal of attention. Hundreds of soldiers and civilians requested that the letters be printed in book form.

THE PUBLISHERS.


UNITED STATES ARMY
U.S.A.
A.E.F.
CITATION
Chaplain Gustave Braun 127th Infantry
FOR DISTINGUISHED AND EXCEPTIONAL GALLANTRY
AT Fargny Ferme ON 18 Sept 1918 IN THE OPERATIONS OF THE
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES
IN TESTIMONY THEREOF AND AS AN EXPRESSION OF
APPRECIATION OF HIS VALOR, I AWARD HIM THIS
CITATION
AWARDED ON 27 March 1919
John J. Pershing
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

HONOR CONFERRED UPON AUTHOR BY GENERAL PERSHING

CONTENTS

		PAGE
1.	Routine Duties at Camp MacArthur	9
2.	Weddings in Camp	11
3.	A Boy's Last Message to His Mother	15
4.	How We Celebrated Christmas at Camp MacArthur	23
5.	Can a Chaplain Shoot?	28
6.	Farewell to "Babe the Second"	32
7.	Tenting in a Snow Storm	37
8.	My Last Letter from Texas	40
9.	Enroute From Texas to New York on a Troop Train	43
10.	We Arrive in Camp Merritt, N. J.	45
11.	In the Scarlet Fever Ward	49
12.	When We Heard of the Sinking of the Tuscania	55
13.	Last Letter Before Leaving the U. S. A.	60
14.	First Letter at Sea	64
15.	We Sink a Submarine	66
16.	Our Arrival in France	71
17.	The Death of Sergeant Seaton	75
18.	Our First Funeral in France	78
19.	Lost at Night in a Rain Storm.—My First Experience in a French Home	81
20.	We Move to Enoms, near Prauthoy, France	87
21.	Sunny France or Rainy France—Which?	91
22.	Exchanging Greetings with a French Priest	96
23.	A French Platoon from the Front	101
24.	A Municipal Wash Tub	107
25.	We Get Hurry Orders to Leave for the Front	111
26.	The Flares of No Man's Land and the Rumble of the Big Guns	115
27.	In the Front Line Trenches in Alsace.	119
28.	Church Services at the Front	123
29.	Four Hundred Yards from the German Front Lines	129
30.	We Bury a German Non-Commissioned Officer	134
31.	Battles in the Air	136
32.	Our First Glimpse of General Pershing.—My Conversation with a Wounded German Officer	139
33.	How We Celebrated Fourth of July in Mansbach.	142
34.	Slightly Wounded	145
35.	My Colonel Interviews a Captured German Officer	147
36.	We Are Rushed to the Chateau Thierry Front	152
37.	In the Aisne-Marne Offensive	158
38.	At the Grave of Lieutenant Quentin Roosevelt	162
39.	German Aeroplanes Over Our Heads and Cooties Under Our Shirts	165

PAGE
40. Church Services for German Prisoners of War . . 169
41. In the Battle of Juvigny.—On Our Third Battle Front 176
42. Burying the Dead Under Shell Fire 180
43. In Pierrefonds Castle 183
44. On Duty at the Convalescent Camp, Mars-sur-Allier, France 186
45. The Delousing Station.—Good-bye, Cooties . . . 190
46. "Our Mothers Think All of Us Fellows Are Rough-Necks—See?" 193
47. "S. W. A. K." (Sealed with a Kiss) 197
48. Re-Classifying the Wounded 201
49. A Totally Blind Wisconsin Boy.—Was He Down-hearted? 204
50. The Latest Dope 208
51. The Day After the Armistice.—"Fin la Guerre" . 212
52. What the Boys Worried About 219
53. Four Thousand Wounded Soldiers at a Thanksgiving Day Service 223
54. The Censorship Rules Are Changed 227
55. A Trip to Marseilles, Nice, and Monte Carlo . . 230
56. Fifteen Hundred Soldiers Get Good News . . . 232
57. How We Celebrated Christmas in France . . . 234
58. Christmas Greetings from Home 238
59. A Chaplain of the German Army 239
60. The Funeral of an American Army Nurse . . . 243
61. Striking Tents 245
62. More Boys Leave for the U. S. A. 246
63. Farewell to the Tented City 248
64. Orders to Leave for Germany 250
65. In the City of Metz, Alsace-Lorraine 251
66. Crossing the Rhine.—Back to My Regiment . . . 252
67. The Land of the Tannenbaum 255
68. General Pershing Reviews Our Division 260
69. One Month Before Leaving Germany 263
70. Church Services in Front of the Burgomeister's Office. 265
71. A Few Hours in Italy 267
72. Along the Rhine and on the Rhine.—The Cologne Cathedral, the Castles on the Rhine and the Lorelei 268
73. Last Letter from Germany 273
74. Church Services in Box Cars on a Moving Troop Train, Enroute from Germany to Brest, France . 274
75. Last Letter from France 276
76. On the S. S. "Cap Finisterre"—Back to the Good Old U. S. A. 277

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Night Flash-Light of Outdoor Christmas Services, Camp MacArthur, Texas 24
Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas 41
Camp Merritt, N. J. 61
U. S. S. George Washington, On Which We Went to France 67
Brest, France 72
Harbor at Brest, France, Which We Entered . . . 73
The Oldest Church in France 90
Wounded French Priest, Who Exchanged Greetings with Author 97
A French Platoon at Our Church Services, Enoms, France 106
Mother 112
Preaching Funeral Sermon at the Front 120
Sunday Church Services in Woods Near German Front Lines 124
Sunday Church Services in Ballersdorf, Near German Front Lines 125
Funeral of First Boy in My Regiment, Who Was Killed in the Trenches 126
Sunday Services Near German Front Lines 127
The Author On Camouflaged Road 130
One of the Countless Big Shell Holes at the Front . . 131
Hurriedly Lowering a French Observation Balloon . . 137
French Observation Balloon Going Down in Flames . 138
Funeral of Sergeant Arnold J. Peterson 141
The Alsatian School Children and French Officers Who Assisted Us in Celebrating the Fourth of July . . 143
Where We Crossed the River Marne 153
French Auto Trucks in Which We Were Rushed to the Chateau Thierry Front 153
The Shell-Wrecked Bridge Across the Marne . . . 154
Chateau Thierry, France 155
Some of the Shell-Wrecked Homes in Chateau Thierry . 155
Bursting German Shell 159
Some of the Dead On the Battlefield 159
Ruins of Church in Coulonges, France 160

Lieutenant Quentin Roosevelt's Grave, Chamery, France 163
German Military Hymn Book 170
The French Tanks 177
With the Most Famous Soldiers in France 178
French Anti-Aircraft 178
Heavy German Machine Guns On Soissons Front . . 179
Stockade with Some of the Prisoners Captured in the Battle of Juvigny 179
Bieuxy, France 181
Pierrefonds Castle, France 184
Preaching to Wounded Soldiers, Mars-Sur-Allier, France 194
Saint Parize 213
Part of Big Crowd of Wounded Soldiers Attending Out-Door Church Services 214
Flag Raising at Mars-Sur-Allier, France 224
Signatures of Wounded German Prisoners 237
Card of Chaplain Torge of the German Army . . . 242
Railway Station, Metz, Alsace-Lorraine 251
Coblenz, Germany 253
The Historic German Fortress "Ehrenbreitstein" . . 253
Selters, Westerwald, Germany 256
Hartenfels, Germany 256
Leaving Selters, Germany 257
Visiting Company "M" 258
Inspection of 32nd Division by General Pershing at Dierdorf, Germany 261
Review of 32nd Division by General Pershing at Dierdorf, Germany 261
Out-Door Military Church Services, Selters, Germany . 266
Lahneck Castle On the Rhine 269
Stolzenfels Castle On the Rhine 269
The Lorelei 270
Cologne, Germany, and the Famous Cathedral . . . 270
Church Services at Sea—Preaching 278
Church Services at Sea—Reading the Scripture Lesson . 280
Our Last Glimpse of France 280
The "Cap Finisterre," On Which We Returned to the U. S. 281

1. ROUTINE DUTIES AT CAMP MacARTHUR

127th Infantry,
Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas,
December 12, 1917.

Please accept my thanks for the letter which I recently received, requesting me to write to the congregation each week, telling of some of my experiences as chaplain in the army.

Every Sunday morning I conduct outdoor church services for the officers and men of my regiment. In the afternoon I visit the sick soldiers in the base hospital near here. On weekdays I go to the base hospital every morning, and in the afternoon I must attend the school of equitation for all mounted officers. This is where we get our drill in horseback riding. Nearly every evening I must attend lectures on military topics. All officers, both mounted and unmounted, are required to be present at these lectures.

I want to tell you about my horse.

One day I received orders to "draw" one government horse for my personal use while in the service. I did not dare to trust my own judgment, so I took with me one of the other officers who is an expert on judging the merits of horses. There were 20 government horses to select from. Mounted officers were entitled to select government horses according to each officer's rank. My own turn

came third. No one knew what the former name of the horse that I chose had been, so I called him "Babe the Second." Some of you will remember that "Babe" was the name of the horse that I rode last year.

You have undoubtedly heard rumors that we may be ordered away from here soon. Thus far no definite orders have been issued about the date of our departure.

A very rigid physical examination is being given all officers before the troops leave here. I understand several officers were disqualified for physical reasons last week. We do not know whether or not we shall be put thru any more tests. I have passed all examinations and qualified in all tests thus far, but we may be given more at any time.

Day before yesterday, General Parker, who was formerly in command of this camp, but who has been absent on duty as an observer on the battle-fields in Europe and has just returned, delivered an address to the officers, telling of his trip and his experiences.

General Haan is now the commanding general of Camp MacArthur.

Governor Phillip of Wisconsin was expected to reach here today, but his train is late and I understand he will not arrive until tonight.

2. WEDDINGS IN CAMP

127th Infantry,
Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas,
December 19, 1917.

I am kept exceptionally busy just before the holidays.

This morning I was assigned to an additional duty. I was ordered to go to the supply company of our regiment and make arrangements for a wagon and a double mule team, and go to the express office each day and sign up for all the express packages addressed to the boys in our regiment and see, too, that these packages are brought out to our post office here in camp. They will be delivered by our mail orderlies after they reach the camp. When you take into consideration that there are over 3,000 soldiers —nearly 3,500 in my regiment—and that each of them will be getting one or more packages this week, you can imagine that this is "some job."

My other duties each day remain the same. I must ride over to the base hospital on my horse and call on sick soldiers every morning, and just after dinner each day I must go down to the bank and deposit the cash receipts of our regimental exchange. I must also sign all checks for merchandise purchased by the exchange. We have been doing from $500 to $1,000 worth of business each day. I do not do any of the buying or selling.

We are getting ready for the celebration of Christmas. I have been trying to figure out how to decorate the outdoor band stand, which is used for band concerts and which I also use for my pulpit each Sunday. I am going to ask for a detail of soldiers and go into the woods that are near the camp, and cut down some branches of trees and, if possible, have Christmas decorations similar to those we are accustomed to up North.

I shall of course conduct Christmas services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day for my boys in addition to the usual Sunday services.

Last Saturday I officiated at a wedding for one of the non-commissioned officers in one of the Milwaukee companies. Last night I had another wedding of a non-commissioned officer, who was not a member of my regiment, but belonged to one of the machine-gun battalions stationed near our regiment. Both the brides were Wisconsin girls. I suppose the women in the congregation will want to know what the brides wore. I have never been an expert at answering questions of that kind, but I can tell what the grooms wore, because they both wore the regulation uniform of sergeants.

Yesterday the horses were given an inspection by a government veterinarian for the purpose of determining whether or not the horses which we have been using down here are fit for overseas service. My horse, "Babe the Second," was taken over to the inspection by my orderly. Some of the other officers tried to worry me by telling me that "Babe" had not passed the test satisfactorily. They know I am

very proud of my horse and, of course, they try to bother me about him all that they can in a good-natured way. I really believed them until I received the report from my orderly; so "Babe" is sure of going whether I pass the test or not.

We hear all kinds of rumors as to when the troops are going to leave this place. Some time ago there was a rumor that we should leave December 20th. Then another rumor put it off to the 23rd. I did not pay any attention to these rumors, as I knew positively that no such orders had been issued. I knew to a certainty that we should be here Christmas because I had asked those who were in a position to know whether or not I should plan for Christmas services to be conducted here. The latest rumors are that the time of our departure has been postponed thirty days. Another rumor has it that it has been postponed for sixty days. Still another rumor is that we shall not leave before we are completely equipped, and one of the supply officers told me today that there are a large number of troops in our division who have not received winter clothing. Another rumor is that the railroads find difficulty in providing trains for transportation. Now you will understand that I mention these things only to show you how impossible it is for anyone to make a reliable statement with reference to the time when troops will leave here. I stated in my last letter that there were all kinds of conflicting rumors down here, and I suppose many of these rumors will reach Milwaukee. Please bear in mind at all times that no rumors are reliable.

I have received a request from the Sunday school, asking me to write a letter to the children to be read at the children's Christmas exercises. I shall endeavor to comply with this request. I am sending a package of Christmas cards today to be distributed in the church. God grant that you all may have a happy and blessed Christmas.

3. A BOY'S LAST MESSAGE TO HIS MOTHER

127th Infantry,
Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas,
December 21, 1917.

Please accept my hearty and sincere thanks for the Christmas box which was prepared by the Sunday school teachers and which I received several days ago. It was labeled "Not to be opened until Christmas." My curiosity was so great that I did not dare to trust myself leaving it in my tent, and so I left it in the regimental exchange. From a special delivery letter which I received from Mr. Borkenhagen I understand, however, that it contained something good to eat. I have occasion to be outdoors a great deal and take considerable exercise, and for that reason always have a good appetite. You may rest assured that I shall appreciate the contents very much.

I did not realize how much I should miss the children of the Sunday school until I was placed where I must preach Sunday after Sunday without a single child being present at the services. We are trying to have a real Christmas celebration in the camp, and from a religious standpoint it will, of course, be a real Christmas celebration, because every Christmas celebration is real which honors the Christ Child. From this standpoint I know we shall have a real Christmas, but somehow or other I know that

many of the boys will feel that there is something lacking. It will not be because their friends back home have forgotten them. The mail wagons and the mail trucks are crowded with thousands of presents. Neither will it be because we have no music, for in my regiment alone we now have two bands. One of them has over forty instruments. The thing which will be lacking in our Christmas celebration at camp will be the smiling, eager, expectant, and happy faces of children. All you who have been members of our Sunday school or church in the past know what pride I took in my Christmas carol boys. I need not tell you how much I shall miss them.

Day before yesterday I sent 500 cards containing Christmas greetings, and I hope they reached you in ample time so that they can be distributed at the Christmas tree exercises. I also sent a separate package of 100 cards to be distributed at the exercises in the Bay View chapel. The card contains a reproduction of a snapshot kodak picture of my horse and myself. The horse is not mine, strictly speaking, but it is a government horse which has been assigned to my exclusive use while I am in the service. I think you will agree with me that "Babe the Second" is a beauty. The only trouble with the picture is that everyone exclaims when seeing it, "Oh, what a beautiful horse!" I do not know whether or not they mean to imply thereby that the rest of the picture is not beautiful; but that is the way I shall take it anyway, so if any of you write to me, please modify the expression a little bit. But speaking

seriously, I really am very proud of "Babe." If he were half as proud of me as I am of him I should feel highly honored. I don't know whether the expression "intelligent" is the most suitable expression to be used in connection with a horse, but I am positive of the fact that "Babe" is no fool. He can always find the way home, and that is more than some people can do. He also knows how to shake hands with his friends. I suppose most people know how to do that, but some horses do not.

Each morning just after breakfast my orderly brings "Babe" up to my tent, and after "Babe" has shaken hands with me we start off for the base hospital, where there are over thirty buildings containing over 1,000 sick soldiers. I do not go to all the buildings, but I visit those wards where the most serious cases of illness are found. In addition to my regular trips, "Babe" and I also make special trips when some boy is in danger of death.

Perhaps you might be interested in having me refer to just one of these cases. A couple of days ago a telephone call came requesting me to come immediately. In such cases I touch "Babe" with the spurs, and he knows what is up. He gallops at full speed. The distance is nearly two miles. This case was in Ward 12. I was shown the bed where the soldier lay, and I went up to him and said, "What regiment are you in?" He said, "The 127th, sir." I then asked, "What company?" He replied, "Company L, sir." I said, "Well, then, you are from Beloit, Wis." He said, "Yes, sir, I am." I said, "Well, my boy, have you any parents?" He replied,

"Only my mother is living." I said, "Very well. Now you are a pretty sick boy, and I am sure your mother would like to receive a letter from you. We will write your mother a letter. Now don't you undertake to strain yourself, but you just listen to me and I will help you. Now let me see; what day did you come to the hospital and when were you operated on, and how do you feel now, and would you like to have me read a passage from the Bible to you, and would you like to have me offer a prayer for you?" After receiving his replies to these questions, I wrote a letter for him, to the best of my memory, something like this: "Ward 12, Base Hospital, Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas, December 19th. Dear Mother: I was brought to the hospital four days ago. I was operated on three days ago for appendicitis. I am feeling quite comfortable, and the doctors and nurses are doing everything they can for me, so you must not worry about the medical attention I am receiving. Chaplain Gustav Stearns is writing this letter for me, but I am telling him what to write. He is also going to read to me a passage of Scripture and offer a prayer for me. He comes here every day, and you will receive a letter every day telling how I am getting along. I am perfectly able to read what he writes. You may address my mail to me directly, as I shall open the letters myself and read them myself, even tho I am not able to write because I am in bed. Greet Grandma —— and also Grandma ——. With much love, your son ———." When I had written this for the sick boy, I let him read it, and he said, "That's just fine,

Chaplain." I then conducted devotions. I might mention that in the beginning of my conversation with him I asked him if he belonged to any church, and he told me to what church he did belong. It is my custom, where boys belonging to some religious faith prefer to have one of their own clergymen or chaplains visit them when sick, always to send for a chaplain of their own faith. After I had conducted devotions I said to him: "Now, my boy, did you hear everything that I read and did you understand and believe it, and was the prayer which I offered just the same kind of a prayer that you wanted me to offer?" He said, "Yes, Chaplain, it was." And I know positively that the boy meant it from the bottom of his heart. I then said, "Well, my boy, I am very glad you sent for me and I am very glad to hear that you are a Christian boy. Now, if you should happen to feel any worse, be sure and tell them to call me at once, whether it is during the day or at night. That is what I am here for."

I then left him and went into the office and inquired about the boy's condition. After learning what his condition was I added this postscript after the boy's name: "Dear Madam: Your son dictated the above letter. He read every word of it after I had written it, but he does not know about this postscript. From the information which I received from the attendants, I infer that his condition is very serious. Everything possible is being done for him. He is a good Christian boy. We will hope and pray and await developments patiently." To this I signed my name. I sent the letter special delivery. If I think

there is any possibility of the near relatives being able to reach here in time, I telegraph them. In this case I did not telegraph.

The boy passed away the next morning at two o'clock. We rendered military honors for him here yesterday. His company marched down to the undertaking parlors and lined up in military formation outside. When the pallbearers were bringing out the remains, the entire company stood at attention and presented arms. I then stepped forward, saluted the commanding officer, and preached a sermon. After my sermon the casket was put in a hearse, the firing squad marched in front of it, I walked immediately behind, the entire company of about 250 men following. When the procession reached the depot the company lined up in military formation again and the casket was removed from the hearse. I took my station near the casket, the firing squad taking a position a few feet from me. The commanding officer gave the order, and three volleys were fired in the air. The bugler then stepped forward and sounded "Taps." I noticed that his knees were trembling slightly, his lips also quivered in sympathy. I glanced at the pallbearers and the other soldiers. They stood perfectly motionless, but the eyes of the pallbearers were filled with tears. The remains were sent to the boy's home in Beloit, Wis. We have had only twelve deaths out of the 30,000 soldiers in this entire division during the three months we have been here, but we have had from one thousand to fifteen hundred boys in the hospital nearly all the time.

Perhaps I should not have written about this in such detail at this time of the year, but there are many young people in our church, and you little boys who are in the Sunday school will grow up to be young men. I want you always to remember that every boy is a braver boy and a truer boy and also a more patriotic boy if he believes in the Christian religion.

Next Sunday I shall conduct the usual regimental service out at camp in the morning, and in the evening I shall preach in one of the churches of our faith in the city of Waco. Pastor Quill is in charge of this congregation. A large number of boys from Wisconsin attend this church regularly. Pastor and Mrs. Quill are both doing exceptionally good work in this city. Mrs. Quill is the leader of the church choir. One Sunday this choir sang at my regimental service. The regimental service which I conduct in camp is conducted early in the morning before the usual hour for services in the city churches, so it is possible for boys to attend both if they desire.

This is the Christmas season. It is the season when we remember the song of the angels and the message of the angels. Many are at this time of the year asking questions about the development of present history and how the Christian religion can be made to harmonize with what is taking place at the present time. There are a thousand and, I might say, a million questions about religion which I cannot answer, because I don't know what answer to give, but I am one of those who believe that no matter what may happen, the Christian faith will never

change. We will continue to believe the same Gospel that we have always believed, and we will continue to believe the same Christmas message which we have always believed, and we will continue to say to each other and to everyone, "I wish you a happy and blessed Christmas."

P. S. In addition to my religious duties, I must attend lectures for officers. At present British and French officers are lecturing in the afternoon, and our own officers lecture in the evening after mess (supper).

We have as yet received *no orders* mentioning *date* of departure from here. Of course there have been all kinds of conflicting rumors, but I have mentioned in previous letters that all such rumors are very unreliable.

4. HOW WE CELEBRATED CHRISTMAS AT CAMP MacARTHUR

127th Infantry,
Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas,
December 26, 1917.

I suppose you would like to know something about how we celebrated Christmas in camp. Last Saturday morning I asked the adjutant's office for a detail of one man from each company and also two wagons from the supply company. These wagons are each drawn by four mules. Each man was ordered to report with an ax. We went into the woods and filled both wagons with green branches from some trees which look as near like our Christmas trees up North as we could find down here in Texas. I have never been a very bright student in botany, so I don't know the name of these trees, but I know that they are not genuine evergreens, but, at any rate, they look very much like evergreens and answer the same purpose. We also were fortunate in securing one extremely large tree, well proportioned, and this we put on top of one of the wagons.

When we returned we drove thru the camp of the Michigan boys, and we felt mighty proud. We knew positively that we had the best Christmas tree in the camp, and we drove very slowly, so they could take a good look. When we reached our camp we commenced work immediately. We placed the big tree in front of the band stand, where I conduct my

open-air services each week, and we used the branches for decorating the band stand. While we were at this work the colonel of our regiment and several other officers came riding by from the drill grounds. The colonel looked surprised, and I have never seen such a smile on his face since I came here. I know

NIGHT FLASH LIGHT OF OUTDOOR CHRISTMAS SERVICES. CAMP MAC ARTHUR, TEXAS.

he was just as proud of the display our regiment was going to make as we were.

But now comes something which I should possibly have said at the beginning of the letter. Several weeks ago I happened to think of a large Christmas picture which was displayed on the billboards in Milwaukee several years ago. Perhaps some of you remember it. It was a picture of the Birth of Christ, 21 feet long and 10 feet high. The picture

was in about twenty colors. It contained absolutely no advertisements. I remember what a wonderful impression it made upon me. When I thought of this three weeks ago I got in touch with the Bill-posters' Association of America, and asked them if it was possible for me to secure one of those big pictures. The manager here in Waco told me that there was just one left, and it would be saved for me, given to me, and put up absolutely free. I knew I was going to spring a surprise on some of the boys which they would never forget. I made arrangements to have the carpenters and billposters at work that same Saturday evening just after we had finished the decorations. This big picture, 21 feet long and 10 feet high, was placed just above the band stand. I also made arrangements to have it lit up with a stereopticon. Christmas Eve, instead of having merely regimental service, I invited Gen. Boardman, who is the highest officer from Wisconsin, to make a short address. I also invited the three chaplains who had organizations nearest to our regiment, to be present and take part. I think there were about 5,000 or possibly more than that in attendance at that service. Our regimental band of over forty pieces furnished the music. The words of the two best known Christmas hymns, "Silent Night," and "Come Hither, Ye Faithful," were flashed upon the screens by means of the stereopticon, and everyone sang, the band playing the accompaniment. The thing which surprised me most was what the general said in his address. I have heard the general speak before, but I had never heard anything from a gen-

eral which touched me so much as this Christmas address by our general. It was really a Christmas sermon. Another thing which pleased me was the fact that one of the Church of the Ascension, Milwaukee, Sunday school teachers was present. Miss Jenkins and two of her friends were in the audience, and I suppose she will tell something about it to the teachers of the Sunday school. All this was very beautiful as long as it lasted, but when it was over I went to my tent, and I suppose that I was the most lonesome boy in that camp. After all I shall never get over hearing the carol boys in Milwaukee sing at Christmas, and Christmas will never be Christmas as long as I can't hear them.

The following day I assisted at other Christmas exercises and delivered a Christmas address.

That was yesterday. Today the usual military routine was resumed. I don't like to tell of what happened today, because today for the first time since I became a commissioned officer, I fell off a horse. I had to let someone else ride my horse and he had run away with him. I was going to show them how easy it was to ride "Babe the Second." First I got on and let him have full rein and rode him at full speed. Then I returned, took off the saddle and rode him bareback at full speed. Then I returned again and took off the bridle and rode him without saddle or bridle, and this time also I let him out full speed. I used only a halter to guide him. Everything went well until we were turning for the return trip. I had estimated that we would make a nice, easy turn. "Babe" thought we were

going to make a right-about face without wasting any extra space. He turned very suddenly. I turned suddenly also, but he and I turned in opposite directions. I landed on the ground. "Babe" and I were both surprised, but I hasten to record that "Babe" stopped and looked at me and waited for me to get up. I guess he was just as sorry as I was. You must not worry about my doing anything foolhardy. This really isn't half as dangerous as it sounds.

We have not received any definite orders about moving. The usual number of rumors are starting, but rumors never start troops. I asked the colonel the other day if he was at liberty to give me any definite information. His answer was, "Why, Chaplain, you know just as much about that as I do. I have received absolutely no orders or information except the orders which you and the other officers have seen. As soon as we know anything definite I shall let you know immediately." We are permitted to tell about movements from here, but we are not permitted to tell anything about what relates to overseas movements. That means that we are not permitted to say anything about the movements of troop ships. Thus far no regiments have left here.

5. CAN A CHAPLAIN SHOOT?

127th Infantry,
Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas,
January 2, 1918.

In the first place, permit me to wish you all a blessed New Year with all that that implies in the fullest sense of the expression.

Perhaps you would like to know how I spent New Year's Day. I visited the base hospital and spoke with the boys in five different wards. One of the boys was exceptionally cheerful. He had improved considerably since Christmas Day. On that day when I looked at him, his head was all bandaged up and he was unable to speak a single word. Those who were in attendance told me what had happened. One of the other boys had tried to play a practical joke. I shall mention this case without referring to any names, because it will serve as a lesson to some who go beyond bounds in playing jokes on others. Down in this part of the country it is customary to celebrate Christmas with fireworks. I don't know whether or not that had anything to do with what took place, but at any rate, the soldier to whom I have referred as a patient was walking on the street down town when another man who was in uniform stopped him and offered him some candy or at least what looked like candy. When he bit into it there was an explosion. Hidden within that piece of what looked like candy there was a torpedo.

The victim was taken to the hospital. His jawbone was fractured. It was necessary to sew the side of his face with nine stitches. I don't know how long he will be kept in the hospital, but it will be for many days to come. When I saw him yesterday he was improving.

Another boy whom I had seen for the first time the day before, had been removed to another ward. He had been operated upon, and I was very anxious to see him again. When I reached the other ward they told me that they had just sent in a telephone call for me, so it was fortunate that I came. As soon as I looked at the boy I knew his condition was critical. He was entirely conscious, so I assisted him in writing a letter home. I felt positive that it would be his last letter. Perhaps you may be interested in knowing what he wrote. Here is the substance: "Dear Brother: I am a patient in the base hospital, Ward 20. I realize that I am very ill. I just wanted to write and let you know that I thought of you and am thinking of you during my illness. I hope you will write just as soon as possible. If anything happens to me I want my body sent home. The chaplain is writing this letter for me. I also want you to know that I am not afraid in case anything does happen. I firmly believe that my Saviour, who died for me when He was here on earth, will take care of my soul in the world to come. I hope and pray that I may get better, but if I do not get well I am ready and willing to say 'Thy will be done.' With much love, I am, your devoted brother. Signed ———."

I had a long talk with this boy. He had been a

sailor on the Great Lakes. His home was in Frankfort, Mich. He was entirely conscious when I saw him at three o'clock yesterday afternoon. Two hours later he passed away.

In the evening of New Year's Day (yesterday) I took part in a religious service.

Today I commenced work on some additional duties. I shall superintend several classes of instruction for those who are unable to understand the English language, and also for those who are able to understand it slightly, but are unable to read and write it. Each chaplain will superintend the classes in his own regiment. The instruction will be from 10:30 to 12:00 o'clock each forenoon. The instructors are selected from the soldiers in the regiment. During the remainder of the day both pupils and instructors attend to their usual duties in drills, etc. Each class will be composed of twenty pupils. This instruction will be continued whether we are in this camp or leave for some other point.

I suppose most of you know that all chaplains are unarmed, that is, they do not carry any firearms. The other day an order was issued that all the officers in our regiment should go out to the target range for pistol practice. I did not know whether or not it was the intention of the order to include the chaplains and was hesitating whether or not to report for target practice. Some of the other officers took it for granted that I was not going out, and so they commenced to joke with me good-naturedly about my probably getting into trouble if I didn't obey the order. To tell the honest truth, I wasn't very anxious to shoot off one of those big pistols, but, of

course, I wasn't going to let any of the other officers know that I was afraid to do anything which they could do. My orderly just brought my horse at that time, and all the mounted orderlies were equipped with pistols. I asked him, "Have you ever shot off your pistol?" He said, "No, sir, the orderlies have not been out to the range yet." I said, "Well, you go down and get your big pistol and I will try it out for you." When he brought it back and handed it to me, together with his cartridge belt, the other officers told me that they didn't think it was necessary for me to go out. I said, "Oh, never mind, I am just anxious to see what this thing will do." This is what I said, but this is not the way I felt. Well, at any rate, we reached the target range, and I lined up with the other officers, and each of us received fifty rounds of ammunition. Then we took turns in taking our position before the targets. An official scorer wrote down my name and rank on a score card. I don't know where the first shot hit, but it never touched the target, this is certain, but after the first shot I made a fairly good score. At any rate, I was told that it was better than the score made by some of the other officers. I know what my score was, and it was entered upon the official records, but I shall not try to compete with anyone back home; and, furthermore, I never expect to make use of any weapon used by soldiers, so none of you need to worry.

We have not received any definite orders about the time of departure from here. My kindest greetings, and I hope and pray that God will bless Brother Arten and you all during the coming year.

6. FAREWELL TO "BABE THE SECOND"

127th Infantry,
Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas,
January 9, 1918.

In one of my previous weekly letters I told you that all of us would be required to receive instruction in putting on and removing the gas masks, and also would be required to pass thru the gas test. In company with a number of other officers I received this instruction and passed thru this test the other day. The gas mask is not as uncomfortable as I thought it would be. I suppose most of you have seen pictures of it. It completely covers the face, and there are two transparent openings in front of the eyes. The uncomfortable part of the mask consists of a pair of pinchers, or whatever they are called, which fit over the nose so that it is impossible to breathe thru the nose. In addition to this there is some kind of a contrivance which is placed in the mouth and fits between the upper and lower lips. I don't know the name of this thing and never want to know it. I shall not explain the details of where the saliva goes to and all that kind of thing, because I don't want any of you to lose your appetite for dinner. Corporal John H. Umbs of Company F, who had received the instructions previously, was kind enough to go after a new mask for me. I suppose that all of the other masks had been thoroly cleansed, but, at any rate, after I saw someone remove his gas

mask, I appreciated receiving a mask which had never been used. Thank you ever so much, Corporal.

Now, then, we put on the mask and start for the first building which is filled with gas. This kind of gas is called lachrymatory gas. I might state the corporal was kind enough to write down this name for me. It makes the corporal feel mighty good to know that he knows much more about some things than the chaplain does. This kind of gas affects the eyes. It results in temporary blindness. After remaining in this room for three minutes with the masks on, we went out of this room, took off the masks, and then just passed thru a room which contained only one-third as much gas. We didn't stop longer than we had to, you may be sure. We went thru this room in order that we might get some idea of what the effects would have been in case we had not had on any masks when we were in the other room where the gas was three times as strong. We got the idea all right. We were told that we must not put our fingers to our eyes. Tears were coming out of our eyes, and they were tears of neither joy nor sorrow. After this we put on the masks again, and then we were taken to another building. Before we were taken into the room containing this particular kind of gas, we were told that if we got a single breath of it we would have to vomit when we came out. We were also told that if we got about twelve breaths of it our remains would be sent home. We were very careful this time to adjust the masks properly. We were told that we should be in this room three minutes. If I remember cor-

rectly, this kind of gas is called strangulation gas. One of the soldiers who went into this chamber to go thru the test did not have his mask adjusted properly. There was a slight leak in the mask, and he became so ill that he had to be taken to the hospital. Another one was subject to violent vomiting when he came out. I remained in the chamber the prescribed time.

After we had come out and taken off our masks, we were told that we would now march thru the room, but before going into the room we must take a deep breath and hold our breath while we went thru the room. Then just before we reached the exit we were told to take one little sniff and then exhale it immediately. We were ordered to do this so that we might know the smell of this gas in case we should ever be subject to an attack. There was no lingering in that room. The sniff which I took was very little, believe me, and I exhaled it very rapidly.

I am sorry to report that my most faithful friend has left me. My beautiful and faithful horse, "Babe the Second," together with the government horses belonging to the other officers, have already been sent from this camp presumably to the point of embarkation. Some of you will imagine that the expression "my most faithful friend" is merely an expression, but I am using it seriously. I never realized before how attached it is possible for a person to become to a horse. You will remember that I told you that "Babe" took me to the base hospital in the morning. On the way over and on the way back I

used to talk to him just the way I would talk to a person. I don't know how much of this he understood, but I am positive that he understood a great deal of what I said. We are not certain whether or not we shall have the same horse assigned to us again. At Christmas time I bought "Babe" a blanket in order to keep him from getting cold. You may rest assured that I didn't take the blanket away when I bid Babe good bye.

Yesterday I had another hurry call from the base hospital. When I reached there the medical officer said, "Chaplain, the boy you are going to see is really very low, but I hope you will not discourage him." I replied, "I have never discouraged a sick boy in all my life." When I reached the bedside, it was difficult for the boy to talk. He said, "Chaplain, please don't tell my mother that I am so sick." I said, "Now, look here, my boy, don't worry about that at all. I have written to many mothers, and I know just what to write. Don't you think we ought to tell your mother something about our having offered a prayer at your bedside?" He said, "Yes, Chaplain, that would be fine, and tell her also that I have prayed every night I have been here in this camp, because it is really true." After coughing for a while and breathing heavily, he also said, "Say, Chaplain, I have got another favor to ask of you. Will you also write to my girl?" I said, "Why, certainly. Does your girl know you are sick?" He said, "Yes, I told my girl I was not feeling well." I said, "Well, how could you tell your girl without telling your mother?" He said, "Well, you know

my mother would worry so." I said, "Of course she would, but your mother is going to be mighty happy when she finds out you have been praying every day, and furthermore, my boy, don't you ever believe that your girl will not be worried if she cares for you, but I am glad you told her, anyhow." I then offered prayer for the boy, and he seemed exceptionally happy, and I am positive that he was happy, and he certainly had reason to be happy, for he was fully equipped and prepared to respond to the last long march which any soldier is ever called upon to make.

7. TENTING IN A SNOWSTORM

127th Infantry,
Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas,
January 12, 1918.

I am writing my weekly letter to you earlier than usual this week. There has been some delay in the mails recently, owing to storms, and I thought that it would be better to make allowance for this. Another reason is that I expect to be unusually busy on the day when I generally write my letter each week.

I had an invitation to preach at a special service in Austin, Texas, last Sunday evening. You remember I preached in Austin one time last year when I was in Texas. I could not accept the invitation this time, however, owing to the fact that the adjutant of the regiment told me that no leave of absence could be given to any of us just then.

Today I conducted a military service at the funeral of one of the boys in Co. F. of my regiment. The remains were sent to the boy's home in Green Bay, Wis. In addition to the commanding officer and the soldiers of Co. F, there was present the boy's mother and his sister from Green Bay. I felt exceptionally sorry for them in their grief. As soon as it was realized that the boy's condition was serious, the hospital authorities sent a message to the boy's relatives. The mother and sister started immediately. When they reached here it was too late

to see their dear one alive. He had passed away several hours before their arrival. Some of you will appreciate how hard it will be for those two women to make the long journey back to Wisconsin under such circumstances. They will have one comfort, however, and that is that their dear one realized before his departure from this life that he was soon to make a longer journey, and he was spiritually prepared to make that journey.

The officers of this division have received confidential information concerning the movements of troops. You are aware from my previous letters that we are unable to give any of the details of such information.

I suppose you have already heard of the snowstorm which we had down here a couple of days ago. The street cars were blockaded and some of them ran off the track. Night before last and last night snow came thru my tent, and yesterday morning and this morning the water in my tent was frozen, so I experienced the novelty of getting up in the morning and washing my face with nice clean snow which I picked up from the floor of my tent. I need not tell you that this kind of weather is something very unusual down in this part of the country. One old-timer told me that they had not had a storm like this down here in the last twenty years, and the papers stated that this is the most snow that they ever have had in this city, as far as is known. I don't want you to get the impression, however, that I am trying to pretend that we are suffering any hardship. Of course, I do not have a chance to enjoy the cozy

comforts of my suite of rooms on Scott and Reed Streets, Milwaukee, but I am sure that I have never felt like complaining about anything that we have experienced thus far.

I have been blessed with the best of health since my departure from Milwaukee. Several of the soldiers have been disqualified in the physical tests. I understand there will be another physical test for us in the near future.

This letter is not so long as those I have written you recently. This is not because I have not many things to write about, but because I have very little time to spare just now. I may write you another short letter in time to be read at the same service as this is read, but I am sending this letter just now because I expect to be exceptionally busy for the next few days and may find it difficult to write on Wednesday, the day I usually write my weekly letter.

8. MY LAST LETTER FROM TEXAS

127th Infantry,
Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas,
Thursday forenoon,
January 16, 1918.

In the weekly letter which I wrote a few days ago, I promised to send another short letter within a few days if I had an opportunity of doing so. I am sending this letter special delivery and hope it will reach you in time to be read at the service on next Sunday.

Yesterday afternoon I officiated at three military funerals; that is, I conducted services just before the bodies were sent to the former homes of the boys. None of the three were from Milwaukee. One was from Stoughton, Wis., another was from Green Bay, Wis., and the third was from Ohio. Only one was from my regiment. Two of the boys I had been to see at the hospital again just before they passed away. This morning just after breakfast, I went to the hospital again to see another boy on a hurry call. He was entirely conscious, but will in all probability not live thruout the day. Two of those who passed away yesterday died of pneumonia, and the third of meningitis. The one whom I was called to see this morning had been operated on for appendicitis, but the appendix had burst previous to the operation.

One of those whose funeral I conducted yester-

day was an exceptionally sad case. The poor fellow had his eyes bandaged many days before his death; and, while I have been making sick calls in hospitals and have seen all kinds of cases for many years, it nearly broke me all up when I went to see this poor boy. He was exceptionally patient, but one day he

CAMP MAC ARTHUR, WACO, TEXAS, WHERE WE WERE IN TRAINING FOUR MONTHS.

asked me very politely, "Chaplain, how would you like to lie here in this room all alone with your eyes bandaged up?" I could scarcely reply, but if I remember correctly I said to him: "I have been thinking about that same thing every time I have been to this room, my boy, and I don't think I could be half as patient as you are." The boy was a firm

believer in the Christian religion and all the comforts which that brings to one who is in trouble, and no one can tell me after this that religion is of no value.

I suppose it is unnecessary for me to remind you that it is absolutely contrary to military rules to say anything in a letter at this time which will give any intimation of the time when any troops may leave here. Any officer or man who writes anything of this nature will be subject to severe punishment. All we are permitted to say is, that in case mail is addressed to any officer or soldier, here at the present time, to his present address at this place, the postal authorities will receive proper instructions so that the mail will reach the person for whom it is intended, even if the person addressed should leave here. Another thing which I am permitted to say is that when troops do leave this place, it does not necessarily mean that they are leaving the country. It simply means that they are at some other army camp or cantonment in the United States, and the probability is that they will remain in this country for some time to come.

You may rest assured that, for some time to come, you will receive a weekly letter to be read in church every Sunday.

9. EN ROUTE FROM TEXAS TO NEW YORK ON A TROOP TRAIN

En route on troop train, in the U. S.
Wednesday, January 23, 1918.

I am writing this letter on board a moving troop train. I am not allowed to state the exact time of our departure from Camp MacArthur, Texas, nor the exact location or name of the place to which we are going, nor the time we expect to arrive at that place. In a general way, however, I may state that we have been travelling for a couple of days already and that we have covered only one-third of the distance. We shall in all probability be travelling on this same train for at least the remainder of this week.

It requires seven special trains to haul my regiment. I am on the first of these. There are three companies on our train, which consists of twenty passenger coaches, four freight cars for the baggage and equipment, one baggage car for cooking our meals, and two cabooses for the train crews. We are served with only two meals each day, one in the middle of the forenoon and the other in the middle of the afternoon. We could not remain healthy if we ate three meals each day without more exercises. Once each day we are taken from the train for a short exercising period. The regimental band is on our train, but is not allowed to play in any town we go thru, as the War Department has ordered that we pass thru all towns as quietly as possible.

At a meeting of officers held just before our departure we were given orders and instructions as

to what to do and to whom to report in case of any railroad accident.

The boys are not allowed to go from car to car at any time on the trip, as this would cause too much confusion. There are guards at both doors of every car.

Two cases of measles have been discovered on our train since we left camp. The first patient was sent back as we had gone only a short distance. The second is quarantined on this train.

Just before we left camp I made a farewell trip to the base hospital. Two of the patients I called on were not expected to live more than a short time. Eight others were in a critical condition. The majority of those who were critically ill had the pneumonia.

Our regiment has been instructed to change its mail address from Camp MacArthur, Texas, to read as follows: 127th Infantry, American Expeditionary Forces, via New York.

So the above will be my new address. Sometimes the words "American Expeditionary Forces" are abbreviated: "A. E. F."

The last line "via New York" does not mean that we shall be in New York City, as we shall not be in New York City or even New York State, but it means that our mail is sent to New York City where they have a complete list of where every regiment is located and it is forwarded to the right place from that point.

P. S. We shall remain at our new camp for some time. I shall write you again just as soon as we arrive there.

10. WE ARRIVE IN CAMP MERRITT, N. J.

127th Infantry,
Camp Merritt, N. J.,
Tuesday, January 29, 1918.

Now that we have safely arrived at our destination, we are permitted to give the name of the above camp. It is located about fifteen miles north of New York City, but is in the state of New Jersey. Since we left Camp MacArthur, Texas, we travelled thru ten different states. The journey took us five and one-half days and five nights. My regiment was in seven special trains. These trains went over various routes. There were 562 privates and 18 officers on my train, which was the first train to leave Camp MacArthur.

The nearest we came to Milwaukee was when we passed thru Indianapolis, Ind. The most interesting part of the route was on the last day, when our train ran along the banks of the Hudson river for more than one hundred miles.

I shall not attempt to mention the many historic places which we passed along the Hudson, because some of you might think that I thought I was writing to persons who were not acquainted with geography. We were exceptionally fortunate in being able to make this part of the trip by daylight.

We are now living in barracks instead of tents. I don't know which I prefer. Of course tents are much colder in winter, and once at Camp MacArthur

there was snow in my tent continuously for three days, but at any rate I didn't catch cold, while now I have been coughing at intervals since my arrival here. I don't know whether a cold is going to develop or not, but I am taking every precaution. There are strict orders issued about keeping the barracks well ventilated at all times. A sentry passes thru all of the barracks and inspects them several times during the night to see that the windows are not closed.

Just after we reached here one of the majors, whose quarters are in the same barracks as mine, asked me, "Chaplain, have you discovered any cooties near your cot yet?" I said, "Oh, go on; what are you trying to hand me?" He replied, "Well, it's a positive fact that there are cooties here," and called in another officer to verify his assertion. Still I was dubious. I had made the statement several times that I had never spent two minutes worrying about submarines or cannon balls or bayonets, but I had spent many minutes worrying about the stories which we read, stating that all soldiers and officers have constant company in the form of a colony of cooties in their clothing and in their beds when they get across the water. I don't know whether we have already run into them, but if we have I can't promise you that my weekly letters will arrive regularly.

I have done considerable boasting about my having conducted services in my regiment every Sunday, regardless of where we were. We arrived at this camp last Saturday night. My services have always been in the morning. You can imagine that the morning after our arrival everyone was excep-

tionally busy, and I thought that I should have to break my rule, but I managed to conduct the service in the regiment that Sunday evening before I went to bed, so thus far my rule has not been broken. In addition to the services, which I conducted myself, I attended two other services.

You will remember that before we left Camp MacArthur, Texas, we received orders to instruct our friends to address us "American Expeditionary Forces, via New York." We obeyed the orders, but thus far we haven't received a single letter with that address on it. Some of the boys are getting blue, and wondering whether or not their mothers and sisters have forgotten them. I suppose all our mail will reach us sometime, but we naturally want it to reach us before it is more than two or three weeks old.

The hardest thing I had to do before I left Camp MacArthur was to bid farewell to Colonel J. P. Joachim, who was my commanding officer last year when we were on the border, and who was my commanding officer ever since I entered the service until the amalgamation of the First and Second Wisconsin Infantry Regiments into what is now the 127th Infantry. It was this officer who was responsible for my becoming a chaplain, as he sent my name to the governor of Wisconsin, who commissioned me when I first became chaplain of the Wisconsin National Guard. Colonel Joachim has been exceptionally kind to me, and naturally I was sorry to bid him farewell. He was kind enough to say, "Chaplain, I am very happy to think that I was responsible for your being

commissioned. I wish you God's blessing in all your activities in the future."

We have no idea how long we shall remain here. We shall be given another physical examination and our troops will receive whatever equipment they lack, before leaving.

11. IN THE SCARLET FEVER WARD

127th Infantry,
Camp Merritt, N. J.,
Monday, February 4, 1918.

I am writing this letter on Monday in order to give it ample time to reach you so as to be read at the services next Sunday morning. Some of the mail that has reached us has been from eight to ten days in transit, but I take it for granted that this delay is not the customary thing.

I conducted regimental services yesterday morning as usual; the building was very crowded with soldiers. There were only two women present, but that is two more than we generally have. My band of forty instruments was not present. The barracks where the band is quartered were quarantined because a case of scarlet fever had developed. This case was, of course, immediately taken to the isolation hospital. We have a base hospital here which, when completed, will have room for 1,800 patients. At present there are about 400 patients. These are from a number of different units. In my first call at the base hospital I went to see a couple of boys who had scarlet fever. I do not know whether I mentioned in my past letters the precautions which are taken when I call at these isolation wards. I made a number of such calls at the base hospital in Camp MacArthur, Texas. As soon as I enter I must put on a long white gown, and before I leave this is removed.

This is to keep the germs out of my clothing. In the ward which I visited here, there were 36 scarlet fever cases in the first room; in the room next to that there were 40 scarlet fever patients. In another ward one of the nurses told me that they had a boy from another regiment who was very ill, and some chaplain had been there to see him, but he had told the chaplain that he wanted to be left alone. I said to the nurse, "Well, now you just watch, and I'll guarantee you that he will see me." I went up to his bed and said to him, "How are you feeling, my boy?" He did not know me and did not answer me. I said: "Look here, my boy, if you belong to any particular church, just tell me which one it is and I'll call any chaplain or clergyman of your own faith which you may desire. I will not say a word to you about religion, if you really don't want me to; but I do wish you would let me write a letter to your mother and send her your greetings. You see your mother will imagine that we chaplains are not attending to our duties if we don't do this. I notice by your chart that you are classified as a Protestant. Now I am one of the Protestant chaplains. Have you ever attended any Sunday school?" This question was what brought the answer. He said, "Yes, sir, I have. I've attended Presbyterian Sunday school, sir." I said: "Very well, my boy, now I do not know of any Presbyterian chaplain here in camp, but I think I know just exactly what he and your mother would like that I should do for you. You have heard about the 23rd Psalm, haven't you?" He said, "Yes, sir, I have." I said, "Very well, now,

don't you like that Psalm?" He said, "I certainly do, very much." I said, "Well, now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll read it to you if you don't mind." He said, "I would be very happy to have you read it to me and to offer a prayer for me," and I know that the poor boy meant it because there were tears of gratitude in his eyes; and furthermore he seemed so happy because I seemed to understand his case. As a matter of fact, the boy really wanted to see some one and have some one talk to him about religion, but, like a large number of other boys, he was too modest to tell anyone just how he felt. Here is something that will surprise you.

Until I had seen that boy I was absolutely and positively homesick for my church in Milwaukee; that is, I had been homesick ever since I reached this camp, because I didn't have as much to do here as I have had before, and I sat around and commenced to feel miserable. I didn't have "Babe the Second" even. You see I didn't know this camp had a base hospital. This is what is known as the "Camp of Last Chance"; that means that it is the last camp the soldiers are sent to in this country before they are put on board ship. I venture the assertion that you have never seen anything about this camp in the newspapers and in the lists of army camps and cantonments which are printed and distributed. This camp is not mentioned, because troops are sent here only to wait until the transports are ready for them. Owing to this fact I did not suppose that there would be any base hospital, because those who come here as a rule are troops who have just passed physi-

cal examination and are waiting to get on board ship, and I didn't suppose there would be any occasion for any hospital. I had felt that my visits to the base hospital in Camp MacArthur were the most important of my work, and I did not suppose I would have any of this work here. The other officers noticed that I was getting kind of gloomy, and they asked me if I was getting homesick. Of course I didn't admit it; but after I had found out about the hospital and commenced making visits there I felt my old self again.

The other day, when I was getting on the street car, I got into conversation with three sergeants. From their conversation it seemed to me that they must belong to some branch of the service with which I was not familiar. They wore the regulation uniform, and so I asked them what kind of work they were doing in the army. They seemed very anxious for me to ask this question. They said: "We belong to the only organization of its kind in the United States Army, and it's an entirely new organization. We are undertakers. There are 200 of us. There are four units and each unit has fifty undertakers; one of these units has already gone across." He said his unit of undertakers expected to cross over in the very near future. I was telling this conversation to another gentleman in the presence of a colored porter; the colored porter noticed the cross on my collar and knew that I was a chaplain. He did some quick thinking and arrived at some peculiar conclusions. If it had been possible for him to grow pale I think he certainly would have grown

pale. I feel positive that he never will enlist. His eyes stuck out and his voice trembled as he asked the question: "Say, Chaplain, do those soldiers that you were talking about wear an ornament with a coffin on it on their collar?"

Last night I preached in a church over in Brooklyn, N. Y. It's a good thing I started from camp early, because it took me two hours and a half to get to the church. I should not have gotten there in time if I had not been invited to take dinner at the parsonage. The pastor of the church is the Rev. Lauritz Larsen. You may well imagine how I appreciated being in a parsonage and church again. In the congregation were several of the Sisters from the deaconess' home in Brooklyn.

I had an invitation to preach next Sunday evening at Fort Hancock, N. J. This is located on the end of Sandy Hook and as I understand it projects right out into the ocean. Captain M. M. Londahl, who is a schoolmate of mine and has been chaplain in the regular U. S. Army for a number of years, is senior chaplain out there. I do not know whether or not I can accept the invitation. I shall, of course, conduct services for my regiment here in camp in the morning. Several other clergymen have asked me to preach for them Sunday evening. I shall preach some place next Sunday evening, but I am not certain just what invitation I shall accept.

We have no definite orders about leaving here as yet. We have received a number of preliminary orders and instructions which I am not at liberty to mention, but these have not contained the an-

nouncement of the date of the departure of our regiment. You may rest assured, however, that you will receive another letter from me before our regiment leaves here. I suppose I have made this letter a little longer than I should have made it, but I had more time today for writing. When I next write, I may be more pressed for time, and so may be compelled to send only a short letter.

12. WHEN WE HEARD OF THE SINKING OF THE "TUSCANIA"

127th Infantry,
Camp Merritt, N. J.,
February 11, 1918.

I suppose you would like to have me make some mention in my weekly letter this time of how the news of the sinking of the "Tuscania" last week affected the boys here in camp who expect very soon to be making a trip on a similar troop ship. The first I heard of it was about 5:30 o'clock the following morning, as I was leaving my quarters to stand "reveille" with one of the companies. One of the officers passed me in the dark and said very quietly, "Chaplain, they have sunk one of the troop ships and the boys who were on board are from our division." I do not know whether or not I mentioned it to you before, but our regiment is a part of the 32nd Division. I was a trifle surprised, but cannot say that I was startled. I don't think any of our officers were startled in the least. They were merely sad to think that in all probability they had lost a number of officers and men who were part of our organization and who had been camped by our side at Camp MacArthur, Texas, for several months.

Later on in the day I went into a building where a number of men from another organization were assembled. They seemed very quiet and so I went over and asked them: "What is the matter, boys,

haven't you received any letters lately?" If you see any gloomy boys in this camp you may take it for granted that they have not received any letters, and that is why I ask this question. All of the mail which has been addressed "American Expeditionary Forces" has in all probability already been sent across, and naturally many of us feel very disappointed to think that a number of the letters which we expected will not be delivered to us until we reach the other side. The boys I addressed, however, were not in this predicament, as they were not members of our organization and their mail had been addressed direct to Camp Merritt. When I learned this I said to them, "Well, I don't see what in the world you're so gloomy about if you heard from your mothers and your best girls." They were still silent, and so I asked them, "Oh, by the way, you're not afraid of the submarines, are you?" One of them stood up and answered: "Yes, sir, I am." I said: "And you really are willing to admit it?" He said: "Yes, sir, I am willing to admit it." I said to him: "Well, look here my boy, you've got a great deal more courage than you think you have, for it takes an awful lot of courage to stand up in the presence of all these other boys and admit that you are afraid." He seemed very grateful for this, and so I asked him: "Why did you join the army, if you are afraid? Don't you know that you are going to be in much more dangerous places later on than you are now?" He said: "Join the army? Why, I didn't join the army of my free will. I was drafted; scarcely any of us boys that you are talking

to now would be in the army if we could help it." I said: "I admire your honesty. Now let me tell you something; you don't need to worry about the submarines in the least. Have you stopped to figure out how many troop ships have crossed the ocean since the war commenced and that is the first ship carrying troops which has been sunk? Why, I have never lost two seconds worrying about the submarines, and I don't think any of our officers have." By this time a large number of the boys had crowded about me and I gave them a long talk. I don't think I have ever given any talk which was more appreciated. Those boys were very grateful. I am glad I had this opportunity because those boys are already on the ocean. The spiritual preparation necessary, of course, was not forgotten in my talk.

I must tell you about an amusing incident which happened the other day. One of the boys in my regiment came and asked if he could see me alone; he seemed very nervous, and I wondered what could be the matter. When we were alone he revealed his predicament, for he asked me very cautiously: "Say, Chaplain, are you willing to officiate at my wedding?" I said: "Is she a Wisconsin girl?" He said: "Yes, sir." I said: "Well, that's a good thing." He didn't seem to know what I meant, but he said, "Yes, sir." I said: "Do your parents know about it and have they given their consent, and do her parents know about it and have they given their consent, and have you received a written permission from the colonel of the regiment in accordance with the latest requirements, and will you stick to this

girl thru thick and thin, and will she stick to you thru thick and thin, and have you gotten a license in accordance with the laws of New Jersey?" To all these questions he replied, "Yes, sir," very firmly. I said: "Well, what in the world do you look so gloomy about then? You look as tho you were going to attend a funeral instead of a wedding." His voice trembled as he replied: "Well, Chaplain, you see the trouble is the guards won't let me bring the bride into camp. They stopped us on the outside, and of course I had my pass, but I had no pass for the bride. I told the guards I was going to get married, but they told me that didn't make any difference; orders were orders, and no one except an officer could get thru the lines without a pass." I said: "Well, now you just forget your troubles. You'll have that bride thru the lines in a few minutes." I called up the military police and made arrangements for a pass for the bride, and just as he was leaving to bring her in I said: "Oh, by the way, how about a bridesmaid?" The poor fellow became sad again and said: "Why, she hasn't anyone with her." I said: "Well, we'll have to get one of the soldiers to be bridesmaid. Be sure you pick out a little fellow so you can lick him if he tries to get fresh and one who is exceptionally homely, so the bride won't get stuck on him." He said: "Yes, sir." And now all our troubles were over, and I am sure the two hearts beat as one, but you can't make any guard see how two persons have been united as one, because they never will honor a pass for one person,

even if two have been made one in the holy bonds of matrimony.

I suppose you will wonder how I can be so cheerful in this letter. I will tell you a secret. Yesterday was Sunday, and we not only had a larger attendance at the regimental service than we had the previous Sunday, but we filled every seat in the big building, and they brought in all the extra seats they could get hold of and we filled them and a number were standing. They told me that was the largest attendance they had ever had at church service in that building. None of the boys were compelled to go. All who were there went of their own free will. I preached on the text, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" As you know, that text tells how Christ showed His mastery over the winds and the seas. In my sermon I referred to the sinking of the "Tuscania," which had just taken place.

13. LAST LETTER BEFORE SAILING

127th Infantry,
Camp Merritt, N. J.,
February 15, 1918.

Altho I wrote a letter the first part of this week, I want to write again now because this will be the last opportunity I shall have of writing from this present camp. I have already told you that it is absolutely impossible for me to tell you about any information which I may have about the movements of troops, but of course I am permitted, without doing anything contrary to military regulations, to state that hereafter no more mail will reach me at Camp Merritt. My address hereafter will be 127th Infantry, American Expeditionary Forces, via New York. I hardly think there will be any change in that address any time in the future as long as I am in the service. No matter what place or country we may go to, that address will reach me.

We have been instructed to prepare postal cards containing merely the words, "I have arrived safely," and our name. These postals we address to our nearest relatives or friends and drop the postals in a mail bag at the point of embarkation just before we get on the troop ships. They are kept at the point of embarkation in this country until the boat which we are on has arrived safely on the other side. A cablegram is sent from there to this country an-

nouncing the arrival of our ship. The postals are then released and sent to the parties to whom they are addressed. In this way our friends and relatives receive word about two weeks sooner than they would if we waited until we had actually arrived and then wrote postals from the other side. I shall of

CAMP MERRITT, N. J., WHERE WE WERE QUARTERED WHILE WAITING FOR SHIP.

course prepare one of these postals for the Rev. Mr. Arten and the congregation.

At an officers' meeting the other day, in giving us final instructions, our commanding general made a remark which caused a great deal of merriment. He stated that everyone should have his hair cut very short. He said, "This is necessary because your hair

will grow during the couple of weeks you are on the ocean. In the case of some of you it may grow white." And then he called attention to the fact that there was no danger of his hair growing white. As most of you know, I have been very touchy about the color of my hair, but I am happy to say there are some things in which I resemble even a commanding general. You needn't worry as to my need of a new hat.

Some of you may wonder how it is that I can be light-hearted at such a time as this, but I believe that it is my duty not only to make an effort to bring religion unto my boys, but also to inspire them with as much cheerfulness as possible, and I believe that it is my duty to endeavor to bring as much cheer as possible to those whom we leave behind when we depart from this country. I hope you understand that the sermons which I preach to my boys every Sunday are just as serious as those which I preached to you when I occupied the pulpit in Milwaukee. I am trying to solve the problem of bringing greater cheerfulness into the lives of those who need more cheerfulness, and greater seriousness into the lives of those who need more seriousness. I want you to read the part that I have just written thru very slowly and carefully, and ponder fully upon its meaning, and then I am sure that you will have sufficient confidence in me to know that I am doing the very best that I can by both God and country.

I have already been requested to have a celebration of the Holy Communion on board ship. The

details of the services have not been arranged, but you may rest assured that services will be conducted.

I shall continue to write my weekly letters. I shall write them every Monday. I don't know when the next one will reach you, but in case you do not receive one each week it will not be because it has not been written and mailed, but it will be because the mail has not yet reached you.

I hope none of you thought I was going to bid you farewell, in this letter. I don't see any reason why we should bid each other farewell. I shall be further away from you than I have been before as far as space is concerned, but I shall not be further away in spirit, and I hope it will be possible for you to say the same with reference to me and my work, no matter where that work may take me.

14. FIRST LETTER AT SEA

First letter after leaving U. S.
With my regiment At Sea,
February 23, 1918.

My last weekly letter was dated at Camp Merritt, N. J., and will undoubtedly be read in the church tomorrow morning. The letter I am writing now will not reach you for some time, and I shall have an opportunity of writing you one or more weekly letters after this, to be sent with this one.

This is the first time I am writing a letter which will be *censored*. We are of course not permitted to say anything about the date we embarked or mention the name of the ship we are on or the name of any of the organizations or officers on the ship with us, or how many ships are in the same convoy, or the course we are taking, or the place we expect to go to, or anything we may see which has any military significance. So you can imagine it is no easy task to write a weekly letter now. I have seen enough new things and interesting things to write a couple of dozen weekly letters to you, and I have started to write one several times, but each time I have had to tear it up because I have remembered some clause in the regulations for censorship which covered something in that line, and that spoiled it all. I am not the only one who has torn up letters. I have seen any number of officers and men sit down to write a letter and think and think and look and then finally give up in despair.

A half a dozen times young fellows have asked me the question: "Say, Chaplain, will you please tell us what in the world we are allowed to write about without breaking one of the censorship rules?" I answered one young fellow: "Well, I'll tell you. If the letter is to your mother you tell her all about the sermon last Sunday. And, if the letter is to your girl, you tell her how much you love her." He said: "Well, I am writing both to my girl and to my mother, but I can't do what you tell me because I can't write the sermon you preached last Sunday and I don't want to tell my girl what you told me to in a letter which is going to be read by someone else."

As there is no rule forbidding us to mention church services, it affords me great pleasure to say that I conducted two church services on the ship last Sunday. The services were well attended. I am not permitted to mention the names of the other chaplains as that would indicate what other organizations or parts of other organizations may be on the same ship. I want to mention, however, that there is a chaplain for the ship's crew and that he and I have become very good friends. He has invited me to assist him at the service which he is going to conduct next Sunday exclusively for the sailors in the sailors' quarters, and I have promised to do so. This will be in addition to the service which I shall conduct for the soldiers.

As there will be one or two more weekly letters written before I shall get an opportunity to send this, and as they will be read at the same service, I shall refrain from making this letter any longer.

15. WE SINK A SUBMARINE

Second letter after leaving the U. S.
and second letter At Sea,
March 3, 1918.

It is now a week since I wrote my last letter, and I shall write you again, altho there will be no opportunity to mail this letter for some time as we have not yet come within sight of land.

For the first time in my life I have officiated at a burial at sea. For the first time in my life I have officiated at a baptism at sea. For the first time in my life I have heard and seen cannon fired in actual warfare.

The burial at sea was the first one which has ever taken place from this ship. The soldier was Private Ralph H. Peters. He was one of the boys in my regiment, but he was not from Milwaukee. I want to have his name appear in this letter because he was the first one of our boys to give his life for his country after we left the United States. He was ill when we left and had been confined to the hospital room of the ship since our departure. The burial service made a wonderful impression on me. I have officiated at many sad funerals, but there seems to be something especially pathetic about a funeral at sea. I shall not describe it in detail. The remains were carried to the side of the ship by six of the ship's crew. Following them were the medical officers of the ship. After them came the company

commander of the company to which the departed soldier belonged, and myself. I had requested the ship's chaplain to assist, and he joined us. Just before the service commenced the ship's officer requested me to give him a signal just before I read the words of committal, as he desired to stop the ship while those words were read. In accordance with

U. S. S. GEORGE WASHINGTON, ON WHICH WE WENT TO FRANCE.

military custom the remains were covered with an American flag. In the words of committal, instead of using the words: "We therefore commit his body earth to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," the following words are used, "We therefore commit his body to the deep." The American flag was then removed and the body was committed to the waters of the sea. Every officer and sailor and soldier stood

at "Attention" while the solemn notes of "Taps," the soldier's "Good night," were sounded. For a moment there is a pause and then the machinery of the great ship was again set in motion and we proceeded on our journey. The flag which was used to cover the remains belonged to the ship, but when the officer in charge of it heard how sacred I considered that particular emblem, he entrusted it to my keeping in order that I might use it to honor the remains of any soldier or sailor at whose funeral I may officiate in the future, not only during the war but also after the war is over.

For four days and nights not a single officer or man on board this ship has been permitted to remove his clothes, and all of us have been ordered to carry our life belts with us at all times, also our canteens filled with water, in order that we might prepare to abandon the ship at a moment's notice.

We have, of course, received daily drills as to where to go and what to do in case the alarm is given. In addition to the customary daily alarm for practice purposes there have also been extra alarms given in order to see if everyone was prepared at all times.

The other day just after the alarm bell was rung the siren whistle was sounded. We knew immediately that this was no ordinary warning. While we were hurrying to our places on deck prepared to get near the life rafts or life boats which had been assigned to us we heard a thundering *boom!* It was the first time we had heard a cannon fired in real warfare—at least it was the first time as far as most of us was concerned. My station was on the starboard

side of the ship abaft the main rigging. Just as I reached it someone near me shouted: "There she is—right out there!" I looked and sure enough—only a short distance from where I was standing I could see very plainly something in the water. It was cylindrical and was standing upright and was apparently not moving with the waves. In one breath, we all muttered: "It's a submarine!" Boom! Boom! Boom! It was the guns from our own ship, speaking in a language which I had never heard before. And then the object disappeared and then there went up a mighty shout: "Hurray;" "Hurrah!" "Hurrah!" I had often heard that shout before, but never have I heard it given under similar circumstances. For those of us who saw it I suppose it was the most thrilling moment of our entire life.

For hours afterward those of us who stood where we could see everything very plainly were busy explaining to those who could not see plainly just what had taken place. It was all over in a couple of minutes, but it convinced every boy on that boat of the fact that we are not travelling on a pleasure trip or an excursion boat and that when we reach the other side of the Atlantic it will not be for the purpose of joining any carefree tourist party of sightseers, but it will be to undertake a very serious mission. The gunner who fired the lucky shot was officially credited with sinking a submarine and he received a reward from the government.

This evening three of the soldiers in my regiment were baptized. I had previously announced at one of the services that if there were any boys who had

not already been baptized, I should be happy to talk the matter over with them, and I was, of course, fully convinced that these boys realized the step they were taking. None of them had previously been baptized or connected with any church.

I suppose this will be the last letter I shall write while we are at sea. We expect to reach some port before it is time for me to write another weekly letter. It is now over two weeks since we went on board and nearly two weeks since we left America.

16. OUR ARRIVAL IN FRANCE—THE JOURNEY FROM BREST TO BORDEAUX

127th Infantry,
First letter after reaching France,
March 11, 1918.

A week ago we landed in France. We have travelled for a couple of days and nights over French railroads, so we have had an opportunity of seeing many of the villages and much of the scenery of this country.

Of course I cannot tell you anything which has any military significance, or discuss any phase of the war or military preparations, because that would be contrary to the censorship rules. So I shall confine my letter solely to other matters which I think will be of interest to you.

The things which impressed us most, outside of military matters, as we landed, were the ancient buildings, the peculiar dress of the people, and the difference in the railroad accommodations.

I can't remember that we saw a single frame building in a trip lasting two days. The buildings are of stone and look very substantial. I take it for granted that this is because stone is quite plentiful while wood is very scarce.

The scenery thru the section we travelled was exceptionally beautiful—much more so than I had any idea it would be.

The costumes worn by the people, especially in the villages and country sections, were very curious to us. The thing which we noticed most was the wooden shoes. When our train passed thru villages and occasionally stopped we could hear a crowd of little boys and girls come clattering along the pavements and we wondered how in the world they

BREST, FRANCE.

could run so fast in those wooden shoes. I was thinking that it would be impossible for the boys and girls here to play "Hide and Seek." In the cities the laboring people wear wooden shoes, but practically all others have footwear similar to that worn in the States.

Another feature about the costumes, especially in the cities, is that nearly every woman is garbed in

black. Many of the mothers also wear heavy mourning veils. I can't remember that I have seen a single woman dressed in any bright colors. Not even the girls and the young women wear any bright colors during the war.

I don't think I can describe the railroad coaches and engines to you. The freight cars are something

HARBOR AT BREST, FRANCE, WHICH WE ENTERED.

like the little cars used for hauling freight on the street car lines back home. The passenger coaches are small and divided into several compartments. These compartments are not connected on the inside, but there is a platform running the length of the coach on the outside, so that if one must go to another compartment he must go outside and walk along a sort of gangplank on the side of each coach. There

is room for eight soldiers in each compartment. Well, this is not so bad during the day, but when night comes then we commence wondering whether we shall be more comfortable standing up or sitting down. We try a little of each. When we get numb by being cramped seated we get up and stretch and give the blood a chance to circulate. The second night some of the officers in the compartment with me thought we might get a little sleep if we took turns at sleeping in the narrow aisle on the floor and doubled together end to end on the seats. After considerable figuring we managed it some way. I can't remember the combination, and if I could I wouldn't give it away, because I should want to get it patented. At any rate, I know I was too long or too tall to be fitted in with those who were to stretch end to end on the seats, so I had the honor of having some of the precious space in the narrow aisle on the floor, but believe me I was happier than I have ever been on a Pullman car back home.

Say, but it was fine to stretch out my muscles and feel the blood circulating. I came almost saying that I was "listening" to my blood circulating. I expect to sleep in many worse places than the floor of that aisle before I get home.

The day after we reached our first camp was Sunday, and I conducted my first military service after landing on French soil. Just before the service commenced we heard rumors that we were going to move to another camp, and within an hour after the service had concluded we were again on the move to another camp, only a short distance from the first place.

17. THE DEATH OF SERGEANT SEATON

127th Infantry,
France, Palm Sunday, 1918

I wonder if you realize how much I shall be thinking of you on this day, Palm Sunday, and this week, Holy Week, the week which has been the most sacred and blessed week of the year during the many years I have endeavored to preach to you and minister to you? Please do not say that I am homesick for you this week, for I will not admit that I am, but surely no one will accuse me of not being patriotic if I admit that I am thinking of you so much, oh, so much and so often this week! It would not be right for me to say that I should long to be with you this week, but I have told my boys how much Palm Sunday and Holy Week and Easter have always meant to me, and I told them I was going to have services something like those we had at home. Accordingly, this morning I preached a regular Palm Sunday sermon, and I felt in a measure satisfied when the boys told me they were going to write home and tell their folks that we had had a real Palm Sunday service in a military camp here in France.

One of my boys passed away today. He was not a Milwaukee boy, but was from Company L. He had enlisted in a Wisconsin company, but his folks live in Kansas. I shall officiate at a funeral for him tomorrow.

We have just received word that one of the boys from Ashland, Wis., of my regiment, a boy whom I saw and spoke with every day while we were on the boat coming across the Atlantic, has passed away. He was taken suddenly ill just before we left the ship and was brought to the U. S. marine hospital in the French port where we landed. We are now far from that place, and of course could not be present at his funeral. I felt his death more keenly than any other thus far since I have entered the military service, because I knew him so well. He had been in my room every day of the trip. I gave him a hymn book just as I left him. I shall never forget the look in his eyes. I know now that he thought it would be the last time we should see each other. I tried to cheer him up and comfort him, and I can imagine he wanted to thank me and say something else, but he simply could not utter the words. Poor fellow, he was afraid he would break down. He knew I thought so much of him and I suppose he liked me pretty well, too. All he could say was, "Thank you, Chaplain!"

I didn't have to tell him that I was going to pray for him. He knew that I would continue to do that. I did not have to tell him to pray for himself. I knew he would do that. I didn't have to ask him if he believed what I had preached. I knew that he believed it, and he knew that I knew that he believed it. There are some people in this world that you don't have to ask a whole lot of questions about their religious convictions. He was one of them. He was a very exceptional boy. In all the time I

was with him I never heard him say a single sentence that he could not have said in the presence of his mother. I never saw him do anything that he could not have done in the presence of his mother. It was about his God and his MOTHER that he was thinking, and it was about his mother that I was thinking, and I suppose he was wondering what I would write to HER in the very near future, because he knew what was going to happen. I suppose he was wondering whether or not he should suggest something to me, but I guess he concluded that I would know what to write without being told, and possibly it was because he was certain that I knew what to write that he looked me squarely in the eyes and gave absolutely no instructions, merely saying: "Thank you, Chaplain." I have told his mother all this and more in the letter which I wrote to her, and altho I have never met her I know she will understand the message, for she was the boy's MOTHER, and a boy's MOTHER will always understand a message of that kind.

18. OUR FIRST FUNERAL IN FRANCE

127th Infantry,
France, March 18, 1918.

I wrote you a week ago just after we had reached our first camp and told you that the following day I conducted my first church service in France, and within an hour we left for another camp only a short distance away. Both these camps are new camps, and, as far as I am able to ascertain, I am the first army chaplain who has been in either of them.

Yesterday (Sunday) after my services I officiated at the baptism of a soldier of another regiment who was present at my service. The organization he is with has no chaplain in this camp.

After that I got on the seat with the driver of an army hearse, and we took the body of a soldier who had just passed away in a hospital near our camp over to an army morgue, several miles from here, and I made arrangements for the funeral. The funeral was held in a French cemetery a short distance from the base hospital. This was the first funeral I officiated at in France. The boy had died of diphtheria. I had spoken with him only a short time before his death when I visited the isolated ward for contagious diseases. I remember one of the attendants cautioned me not to go in there, but I replied that was the very least I could do. The boy who passed away was not a Milwaukee boy, so

I do not think any of you know him. He was from Company G in my regiment. This is the same company which lost a boy when we were on the ocean.

I am so thankful I went, because it would have been exceptionally hard for me to have conducted that funeral if I had remained away from the poor fellow when he was ill. As the funeral was on Sunday there were a number of French people in the cemetery, visiting the graves of their relatives who had passed away. When the visitors to the cemetery saw that an American soldier was about to be buried they came over near the grave and stood with uncovered heads during the entire service. In my address I thanked them for the respect and reverence they had shown at the service, and asked that my words be repeated in French by those of them who understood English to those who did not. The American government has made arrangements for a part of this cemetery to be reserved for American soldiers who die at the hospitals near here. When we leave the camp here for what is known as the War Zone or the Active Zone, it will be one of my duties as regimental chaplain to make arrangements with the proper authorities for a suitable grave in whatever place a death occurs. The grave of every American soldier is marked, and the War Department is notified of the exact location of the grave; so the relatives will always be able to find this grave after the war is over, by making inquiry of the War Department.

Every soldier and every officer always carries a tape around his neck with two identification tags.

Both of these are exactly alike. Both contain the name and the rank and the organization of the soldier or officer. In case of death one of these tags is fastened to a cross over the grave and the other tag is buried with the body, in order that if the grave is ever dug up in the future, there will be positive evidence about the identification of the body. The record of the burial and location of the grave is sent to the War Department at Washington, which notifies the nearest relatives of the departed soldier.

Each regiment has a statistical clerk, and every time before we move from one place to another, if we are going to make a journey on a train or ship, he comes around and asks each one of us for the name of our nearest relative or the person we wish notified in case we meet with any accident.

Perhaps you will think it strange that I explain all this, but undoubtedly many persons who will hear this letter read have wondered what is done in such cases—at least many persons have asked me about these points at various times, and I thought it might not be out of place to explain it, especially because I take it for granted that all who listen to the reading of these letters each week are interested in the same things that I am interested in at the present time.

I have authority to do my own censoring as far as the censorship in our own regiment is concerned, but, of course, my mail may be opened by proper officials after it leaves here if they choose to do so. I also censor a number of other letters besides my own.

19. LOST AT NIGHT IN A RAINSTORM—MY FIRST EXPERIENCE IN A FRENCH HOME

127th Infantry,
France, Easter Monday,
April 1, 1918.

Thursday evening of Holy Week, I officiated at the celebration of Holy Communion. The following day (Good Friday) I conducted military services in two different camps, the one I am in and one near here, and yesterday (Easter Day) I left our camp before breakfast time, conducted services in two other camps, at 8 o'clock and 9 o'clock, returned to our camp and conducted a service at 10:30 o'clock, and in the afternoon I visited three other camps. Two of the services were communion services.

I travelled alone on a motorcycle to all of the places. The round trip was over one hundred miles. There really was no danger as far as the war is concerned, but it was raining nearly all day, and I was just covered with mud and soaking wet within an hour after I had left our own camp. In one of the camps where I spoke outdoors, I stood on top of a plank platform, which we put together in about two minutes. There was no railing to it, and during the sermon I forgot myself and commenced gradually stepping back. The first thing I knew I had stepped off and fallen into the arms of a couple of officers

who had expected that sooner or later I would do just that very thing. It was fortunate they were prepared for it, because the platform was pretty high, but they told me afterward that I completed the sentence I had started without a single break and kept right on talking, so you see it really didn't make any difference.

When I left the last camp, which was about forty miles from home, I was urged to remain overnight, because it was raining and just getting dark, but I tested my lights and thought they were in good condition, and so I lit them and commenced the return trip, because I wanted to get home and into some dry clothing. I didn't like to ask anyone else for their clothes. But I hadn't gone very far before it commenced raining harder and harder, and now it was as dark a night as I have ever seen. I hated to turn around, and so I kept on going. This was not the same road I had taken on my way out and I had never been over it before. I did not pass thru any villages. I did not meet anyone, and I could see absolutely no lights from any farmhouses. It kept on raining hard and also commenced growing colder. I was drenched thru and thru, my fingers commenced getting numb, and then the lights on my motorcycle commenced gradually to get dimmer and dimmer. I got off my machine and shoved it to one side of the road so it would be out of the way and would not cause any accident, in case anyone should come along, and then I started off on foot. It was hard for me to keep in the road even while I was walking, because it was so pitch dark and the rain was

blinding my eyes. But I knew I had to continue walking, to keep the blood in circulation, so I simply walked on. Finally I saw one of the most welcome sights I have ever seen. It was the faint glimmer of a light! I turned off the road and waded thru some water and mud and stumbled over several things, but kept on headed for that little light. Finally I reached it and rapped on a door, and when that door opened I saw another one of the most welcome and to me most beautiful things I have ever seen in my life. It was a great big open fireplace with some crackling burning wood and several people pointing me to a chair. I didn't take the chair. I just crowded as near that fire as I could get, and I held my hands over it and then I commenced shivering like a leaf and my teeth commenced chattering and I tried to utter the French words "Thank you," but was unable to do so, because my teeth kept on chattering. I commenced laughing, because I wanted to say to my teeth: "All right, just keep on chattering all you want to—I am going to stick around this fireplace until you get good and tired of chattering, and then we will try you out on the language which those people speak and which you have never spoken before." And believe me, before I got thru that evening my teeth were forced to utter French words which no Frenchman has ever heard before. For these good people could not speak or understand a word of English, and I have never studied French, so you see it was a case of genuine kindergarten class in foreign languages. But I had a little French-English and English-French dictionary with me, and

what we didn't do to that poor little innocent book was a caution!

There were no soldiers quartered near this home, but two of the Frenchmen present had been at the front. One of them had returned because he was wounded, and the other was home on a short furlough. They noticed my shoulder-straps and my "Sam Brown" belt (this is a belt which all commissioned officers must wear after they reach France. It is a russet leather belt which fits around the waist and then a russet leather strap attached to this crosses over the right shoulder). As soon as these two men, who had been privates in the French army, noticed my uniform I heard them commencing explaining to the other members of the family that I was either an American or an English officer, and a little later I heard them decide that I was an American officer, and I could tell that they knew by my shoulder-straps that they had been able to determine my rank. And then they got busy. Talk about hospitality. Say, what do you suppose I had bumped into? Let me tell you. But I must break the news to you gently. Please remember that I had left the camp before breakfast, and that I had travelled over a hundred miles and that I had conducted several services. Say, that Sam Brown belt was so loose and I was so hungry that I scarcely knew my own name. Then the good woman of the house commenced with some of the most charming questions I have ever heard in any language. I don't know the rest of the first sentence but there is one French word which by good fortune happens to be the same as the English word

for the same very charming life saver of one who is starving. It is the word "soup." I gathered from what she was saying that she was asking me if I would like some warm soup. *Would I?* I must reiterate that question. WOULD I? Here is what I wanted to answer, "Lead me to it." But I have learned a couple of words of French and I astonished and pleased those good people by turning loose the right words at the right time and place. Here they are: "Oui, merci," which in good old United States language is "Yes, thank you." Did I get that soup? Well, I should say I did. I "got" every drop of it, and then I sprung another word on the family which word happens to be the same in French and English. The French pronunciation of it is slightly different from the English, but the way I spoke it was perfectly understood. It is the word "Excellent." I repeated this several times. I don't know whether or not you get the meaning, so I shall explain it to you. When a man with a very loose belt looks into an empty soup plate which he has just emptied and repeats the word "excellent" several times it means that a full soup plate would look more "excellent" to him than the empty soup plate, and if you will pay close attention to the number of times he looks into that soup plate and the number of times he says "excellent" and *multiply that by two,* you can figure out the number of filled up plates of warm soup he can still get away with!

Now I didn't have to explain to that good mother.

She laughed and disappeared into another room, and before she got thru laughing and disappearing into that mysterious room that night she had brought in many plates. Each time it was something different from soup, and each time I repeated the word "excellent." What do you suppose I had bumped into? I have asked that question before, but I told you that I wanted to answer it gradually.

It was Easter Sunday evening, and it was a *family reunion.* Two soldiers had returned from the front, and that family was having one of the greatest family celebrations and one of the *greatest feasts* they had ever had and the like of which they possibly would never have again. It would not be called a banquet in America, but believe me I have never in my life been at any banquet where food was so welcome, and I never before knew how nice it feels to get some good, honest, plain, nourishing food! It certainly was *excellent!* I should like to tell you the rest of the story, for the rest of it was just as interesting; but my candle is burning low, and "Taps" have sounded long ago, and I must get up early tomorrow morning, so I shall tell you the remainder of the story when I return, for I shall probably have something different to write about in my next weekly letter.

20. WE MOVE TO ENOMS, NEAR PROTHOI, FRANCE

127th Infantry,
France, April 8, 1918.

We are now in a different part of France from where we were when I wrote my letter last week. Our surroundings are entirely different. Thus far since leaving home we have lived on troop trains, in both the United States and France. We have lived in tented camps in Wisconsin and Texas. We have lived in army cantonments in New Jersey and France. We have lived on troop ships on the Atlantic. Now we are getting a new experience. At last we are living in "billets" in the War Zone.

But before I commence telling you about our life here I want to tell you about a couple of places I visited before leaving the place where I wrote my last letter.

I went to a little jewelry store to have my wrist watch repaired. By chance the jeweler used an expression which sounded familiar to me, and I was pretty certain it was not a French expression, and so I thought I would take a chance at another language and I said to him: "Sprechen Sie Deutsch?" He answered: "Ja wohl."

He was the first Frenchman I had ever run across in the month I had spent in France who spoke German. I told him so and he laughed and replied that there were undoubtedly a number of French people

who understood German, but I had not happened to meet them. He was a Mecklenburger and had been a soldier in the French army for 20 years. I told him I was anxious to visit a famous cathedral which was in that neighborhood, and asked him to direct me so that I might find it. To my surprise he called in his wife, and told her to look after the business, and then said he would accompany me and explain all of the ancient and historic details to me. I told him not to go to such trouble, but he insisted upon doing so, and, to tell the truth, I was mighty glad he did. Of course, I am not at liberty to tell you what cathedral it was or to give a complete description, because that would be telling where we were, and that is contrary to the censorship rules. But I may mention that several archbishops were buried under its walls, and tablets with Latin inscriptions were inside of the building just over the places where they were buried. There were a number of wonderful paintings in the cathedral. One was "Jesus Raising Lazarus from the Dead." I had never seen any painting so true to life.

When I had seen the most interesting things in the cathedral my friend asked me if I would like to see the oldest church in France. Would I? Well, you can imagine how such a question would get me all excited. Why CERTAINLY I would, but I had never heard that the oldest church in France was anywhere near that place. Well, he took me to a church, a portion of which was *sixteen hundred* years old. Just imagine it. Not *six* hundred, but SIXTEEN hundred years old. Just imagine if you can a church

which was built more than a thousand years before Columbus landed in America. This church was not so large as the cathedral, but it was several hundred years older, and for this reason was much more interesting to me.

Well, I thought I had seen enough ancient things to satisfy me for a good long time, and I told my friend so. He was immensely pleased, and then he gave me another shock by asking if I would like to see the ruins of a building which was a couple of hundred years older than either of the churches which we had just seen. By this time I was prepared for almost any kind of surprise, and I told him so. And then we went to a place, and the minute I caught sight of it I knew what I was looking at, because I had seen pictures resembling it before, but never dreamed that I should ever see any walls so ancient. I was looking at the ruins of an ancient Roman theatre which were *two thousand years old.* Now, don't get the wrong idea. We have not been and are not now on the Italian front. This was in France. It was built by the Romans when they occupied a portion of France.

When I returned to camp that night and told the other officers what I had seen that afternoon they were anxious to see the same things, but they didn't have the opportunity. The next day we left the camp where we had spent about a month. Now we are far away from there. We are in "billets" in a little French village, but it is getting late and I shall tell you about this place in my letter next week. I have already used up one candle tonight in writing

this letter, and even candles are scarce and expensive here. I have a few more left, but I am not certain that there will be any for sale when I have used up the few I have managed to get, so I shall bid you "Bon Soir," which being interpreted means "Good Night."

THE OLDEST CHURCH IN FRANCE, BUILT IN FOURTH CENTURY, IN BORDEAUX.

21. SUNNY FRANCE OR RAINY FRANCE —WHICH?

127th Infantry,
France, April 15, 1918.

I have been tinkering with my little typewriter for the last few minutes and have managed to get it in running order again, so here goes for another weekly letter. I mention this about the typewriter, because before I get thru with a letter the ribbon generally becomes twisted or something else goes wrong, so the letters are not so neat as they should be, and I take it for granted that you will sometimes find difficulty in making out the words. Furthermore, some of the letters may be changed in wording somewhat, but please do not blame that to the censor, because he is not at fault. I have tried managing both horses and motorcycles, and I have fallen off from both, but I have finally become somewhat of an expert in managing both. But when it comes to little lightweight typewriters which have been packed away in baggage boxes and tossed about on troop ships and troop trains and then unpacked and again ordered to report for duty, I find that I have yet much to learn about the management and operation of such a machine. I make all this explanation about this machine and its present condition, because it really was a good machine when it was given to me, and I appreciate the

gift, which I had received a couple of days before I left the United States.

Pardon me. I just leaned over to fix something, and the lighted candle singed my hair. Well, I am not going to scold that poor candle. That is one of the best little friends I have. May you live long and prosper. At least may you live long enough for me to finish this letter. I hope you didn't have any serious grudge against my hair. Possibly you thought that the hair on the top of my head ought to be as closely clipped as we are ordered to have it clipped on the other parts of our head, but you are mistaken. Well, at any rate, I haven't the time or the inclination to investigate as to how much hair you deprived me of. I shall probably know when I get to the mess table tomorrow and the other officers ask me where I got my hair singed.

Let me see (now I am talking to you who are listening to the reading of this letter), let me see—I promised to tell you something about the life in "billets", didn't I? Well, credit we with what I have said about candle light for one thing. That is about the only kind of light we see here. We very seldom see our former friend the SUN. We take it for granted that "behind the clouds the sun is still shining," but we are in the Infantry and not in the Aeroplane section of the army, so we have not had a chance to go up and investigate whether the sun is on the job behind the clouds or not. We know that the clouds are doing overtime duty. Say, honestly, it is dark or cloudy or raining here practically all the time. In Texas we had more of a

variety. There we had *rain* in capital letters for a while and then *mud* in capital letters for a while, and then sunshine in capital letters for a while and then *dust* and *wind* put together, and both in capital letters.

Here we have damp and rain in small letters all the time. I don't know whether you get the idea or not, but I hope that you do. In Milwaukee there is a firm of awning makers, and they use an advertisement which reads:

"WE FOOL THE SUN."

I am not good at cracking jokes, but here is one that I tried to originate. Here in France we do not see any of those signs, and perhaps that is the reason why we must put up a big sign reading:

"THE SUN FOOLS US"

Let me explain. About once every two weeks or so, our long lost friend the *sun* takes a notion that he will play a joke. Ah, oh, what do you know about that, boys? The sun is shining at last. No rain today. Ah, oh, say, isn't it lovely, Ah, oh, etc., etc. These are our expressions for several minutes or possibly an hour or two, until all the Doubting Thomases have been convinced that it actually is the sun and not the moon which is on the job. Sure enough. It certainly is the *sun*. Why, certainly, didn't we tell you so? Why, certainly, we knew it yesterday or a week or ten days ago that today there would be *sunshine*. Is everybody convinced? All together now. *What is the matter with the sun? "He's*

all right." "Who's all right?" "The sun." "Who says so?" "We all say so!"

Here is where the joke comes in. *We* look up, but alas, what do we see? Yes, ladies and gentlemen, *what?* The joke is on us. For this is not Milwaukee, and the paint which fools the sun is not made in France. Here the sun fools us *not* by *shining* but by HIDING.

I hope, my dear people, that you will not think I am always frivolous, and that I am always trying to crack jokes. I am as serious in my sermons as I ever was when I preached to you, and I do more preaching each Sunday than I ever did in Milwaukee. But on some dark, gloomy days I consider it my duty to use all of the talents which God has given me to bring as much sunshine as I can into the lives of the boys in my regiment, and I shall continue to do so.

But every Sunday I preach to them. I preach real serious sermons. Yesterday was Sunday. I preached to six different groups in six different places. In order to reach all I left here before breakfast, the same as I did on Easter Day, but we are much nearer together now, so I did not have to travel far. One service was a funeral service. The last service was a communion service. It was late when I finished my Sunday services, but I sat up several hours more that night and censored letters, because I have been made the regimental censoring officer now, in addition to my other duties. This occupies my time for about four or five hours each day. I don't want you to misunderstand me. I don't pretend I am

working harder than anyone else. I am simply doing my share of the work, which must be done.

I wanted to tell you many more things in this letter, especially about this quaint old place and the quaint customs of the people; but my typewriter refuses to work any longer, and my candle is burning low, so I shall save some of my story about our life here, for my letter next week.

22. EXCHANGING GREETINGS WITH A FRENCH PRIEST

127th Infantry, American E. F.,
France, April 20, 1918.

I believe I mentioned in one of my previous letters that my regiment is billeted in several villages. There is an average of about two companies in each village, depending upon the size of the village. In the village where I am there is one company and parts of two other companies.

Each Sunday, I not only preach to the soldiers in this village, but try to conduct services or speak in all of the other villages where the soldiers of my regiment are billeted. I travel with a motorcycle.

There are practically no isolated farmhouses out in the country, as the people who till the soil or are engaged in other agricultural pursuits as a rule live in these little villages. At night the shepherd comes into the village followed by his flock of sheep. He does not follow them. They follow him. The milkmaid brings in her cows to the village each night. There is no main street. All the streets are what we would call winding lanes or alleys. There are no sidewalks. The houses are quaint and old-fashioned. They are all of stone and have tiled roofs and many of the roofs are covered with moss. The part of the house used by the sheep and chickens and cows, adjoins the part of the house used for residential purposes.

At the intersection of two or three or four of these lanes or streets or alleys—or whatever you choose to call them—there is an open space near which is the village church. There is only one church in each village.

WOUNDED FRENCH PRIEST (left) WHO EXCHANGED GREETINGS WITH AUTHOR (center) AND WOUNDED FRENCH ALPINE CHASSEUR LIEUTENANT (right).

In this village I conduct my military services in an open space near this church. The priest of the village church has lost one of his legs in this war. He was burying the dead when a bomb struck near him. I called on him and invited him to attend one of my services and speak a few words. He spoke

in French as he does not use English. The French interpreter who is on duty with our regiment made the translation, which follows. I also include my response and the words of welcome which I addressed to our Band. Our Band was quarantined in the U. S. when we left and has just joined us.

GREETINGS BY THE VILLAGE PRIEST

(TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH)

My dear Friends: Your Reverend Chaplain, to whom I convey a hearty greeting, asked me to take place by his side during this religious and patriotic meeting. Further, having expressed his desire that, in spite of my lack of knowledge of English, I should address you in a few words, I wish to state that I consider it a privilege and a great honor for me to do so.

Having been a soldier myself, proud of the wounds received at the service of my country, this noble France to which you are showing so much sympathy and love, I am glad to express a heartfelt welcome to you who are going to face bravely the perilous and glorious fight.

In order to release our dear France from the yoke of the enemy, to allow every nation to be free and to bring about a righteous peace, you left everything you loved, you courageously crossed the ocean, you are ready to give all you have, even, if necessary, to shed your blood.

What French soul could not admire your noble deed! What hearts would not be deeply moved by your sublime sacrifice! And who could but feel

a boundless and everlasting gratitude for all you have done and all you are going to do!

Willing to re-establish peace and justice between God and men, our beloved Christ endured the worst of tortures and suffered the frightful torments of the cross. May He protect all of you. May He give strength and bravery to bring about the noble aim set forth by your illustrious President: "May all selfish dominations be overthrown in the dust, and may Right be the law of the world, thanks to the triumph of Force based on Justice."

REPLY BY CHAPLAIN OF THE 127TH INF.

We thank you most sincerely for your kind words of welcome.

We know that every word you have uttered comes from the bottom of your heart, and for this reason the welcome means so much more to us. You were ready to receive us as soon as we reached your village, and we knew directly we looked into your kindly face and beaming eyes and outstretched hands that you were glad to see us, and that you had confidence in us and that you trusted us.

I feel highly honored because you accepted my invitation to be present and take part in this service today; I want to thank you also because you offered me the use of a large assembly room in your parish house in case the weather prevented us from holding our service in the open air.

In beautiful and patriotic words you have referred to your love for your country, but more significant to us is it that you who have uttered these words

have lost one of your limbs in the service of your country. We salute you and congratulate you because your country has recognized your faithful services.

You have referred to our Blessed Saviour and His death upon the cross, and you pray that He may protect and bless all of us and give us strength, so that the noble aims of our President may be realized. We believe God will answer your prayers.

We pray that our Saviour will bless you and your village and your nation and that He will grant us grace to be as faithful to our country as you have been faithful to yours, and we also pray that the two countries which were united by the bonds of love when Lafayette of your country grasped the hands of Washington of our country, may remain united in the bonds of love until the end of time.

GREETING TO THE REGIMENTAL BAND BY THE CHAPLAIN OF THE 127TH INF.

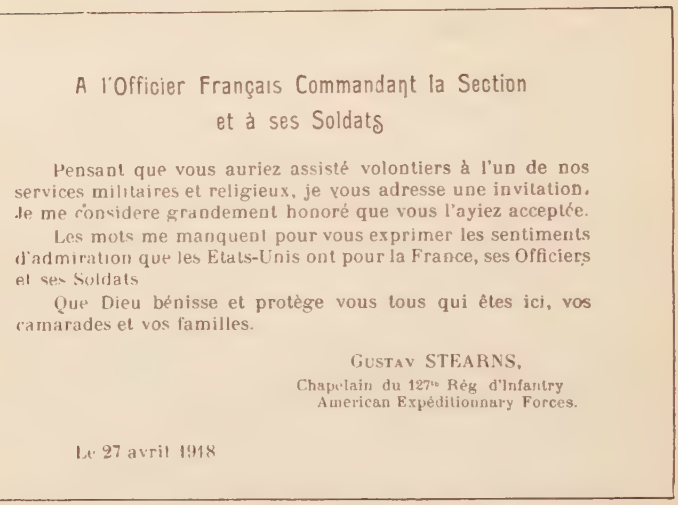
We are exceptionally happy today to see you boys of the Band and your talented leader with us again. I am sure you never realized how much we missed you while you were separated from us for a time. Well, one thing is certain, in some cases "absence makes the heart grow fonder." Welcome back, boys! Welcome back, Mr. Leader! And thank you ever so much for always being willing to furnish the music at the church services of our regiment

23. A FRENCH PLATOON FROM THE FRONT

127th Infantry, American E. F.,
France, April 29th, 1918.

Yesterday I conducted four different military church services, besides visiting a military field hospital. At one of the services a platoon of French soldiers together with their commanding officer were present. I had gotten acquainted with their commander at our officers' mess. He and I sat next to each other at meals and became great friends. I think one of the reasons was that he knew about as little English as I knew French, so neither of us was conceited about our knowledge of languages. Well, at any rate, we took a great liking to each other, and he told me he was going to attend my open-air church service and also stated that he thought some of his men were coming, altho they could not understand the language.

In order to show my appreciation and make them feel that they were entirely welcome, I sent to the nearest French printing office, which is a considerable distance from here, and had some souvenir cards printed, which were distributed among the French soldiers by their commanding officer at the conclusion of the service. I enclose one of these cards translated. (See next page.)



A l'Officier Français Commandant la Section
et à ses Soldats

Pensant que vous auriez assisté volontiers à l'un de nos services militaires et religieux, je vous adresse une invitation. Je me considere grandement honoré que vous l'ayiez acceptée.

Les mots me manquent pour vous exprimer les sentiments d'admiration que les Etats-Unis ont pour la France, ses Officiers et ses Soldats

Que Dieu bénisse et protège vous tous qui êtes ici, vos camarades et vos familles.

GUSTAV STEARNS,
Chapelain du 127ᵉˢ Rég d'Infantry
American Expéditionnary Forces.

Le 27 avril 1918

INVITATION TO FRENCH PLATOON TO ATTEND OUR CHURCH SERVICES.

To the Commanding Officer of a French Platoon and the Men of His Command

Thinking you might desire to attend one of our military church services, I extended an invitation to you, and I am highly gratified that you have accepted.

It would be impossible for me to tell you of how highly the American people appreciate the citizens of France and the officers and soldiers of the French army.

May God bless all of you and your comrades in the field and the members of your families.

GUSTAV STEARNS,
Chaplain, 127th Infantry, A. E. F.
April 27, 1918.

An official United States Army photographer was present and took a snapshot picture during the service. I'm not certain whether or not it is contrary to censorship regulations to send these photographs thru the mail. I'm the regimental censoring officer myself, and of course have the authority to pass upon it, but I don't like to pass upon a picture which I am interested in, and for that reason shall ask the censoring officer from some other military unit to give an opinion. I hope that I will be able to send you one of the pictures.

I am, of course, not allowed to state what French platoon was present or to mention the battles which they have taken part in, but they belong to one of the companies which have been in the thick of the fighting. The officer who was with them was the only officer alive out of four officers in that company. The French soldiers mixed very well with our boys. Naturally their uniforms and equipment attracted a great deal of attention. Their uniform is a grayish blue in color. Our boys were of course eager to learn of their experience in the trenches and upon the battle-field. The conversation was carried on in a language which even I could understand. It consisted mostly in the waving of arms and a number of other motions of the body and expressions of the face. It would be easy for me to tell a French soldier from an American soldier even if they were to exchange uniforms and didn't utter a single word of any language. I could tell them even a block away. Practically every French soldier will raise a mustache or endeavor to raise one. Sometimes he

is only ten per cent successful, sometimes he is only fifty per cent successful, but you may rest assured that there is always an attempt. It is taken for granted among the French that if a young man does not raise a mustache it is because he isn't able to do so. One of the greatest compliments that has been paid to me since I came to France was from a French person who said to me, "Why, you certainly must be able to raise a mustache." I said, "Oui, Oui," which being interpreted means "Yes, Yes." I suppose they thought I would commence immediately, but please do not worry, as I don't think I shall ever acquire the habit. It may be that I shall be the only soldier or officer from the American Expeditionary Forces to return to my native country without a mustache, but after due deliberation I have decided that I want to return as little changed as possible—even as far as outward appearances go.

Gas masks and steel helmets have now been issued to all the officers and men of our regiment. We were of course taught how to use this equipment when we were in Texas.

There have been some animated discussions among the boys recently relative to the comparative horse power of "cooties," "graybacks," "bedbugs," and plain, ordinary "body lice." I have not become an expert judge in anything except "chigoes" (pronounced "jiggers"). When I was in Texas I considered myself an authority on "chigoes." The corresponding insect in this part of the country is "cooties." They have become famous in Empey's book, "Over the Top," and of course all our boys,

after reading that book in the United States, made up their minds that they were not real soldiers until they could boast of having a little colony of cooties. In this respect I have not become the "real thing" thus far, but I suppose that I have it coming to me. Well, if that belongs to the game, I certainly want to get them also, because I don't want any boy to go back to Milwaukee and boast that he has gone thru something which I didn't go thru myself.

Thus far I have been blessed with the best of health, in fact I presume that I have never been healthier in my life than I am at the present time. Candle light may have its disadvantages, but it certainly helps a person to retire early at night instead of early in the morning. The electric lights which I had in my study in Milwaukee were exceptionally handy and convenient, and so were the many books which I have in my library there, and I have missed both the electric lights and the many books very, very often. I have only two books with me except my Bible and a one-volume commentary on the Bible, which I got in Texas. I get absolutely no magazines, and in the last three months I have received only three copies of one newspaper from the United States. So here I have not been tempted to sit up until the early hours of the morning reading books and papers the way I used to do many times in Milwaukee. I have had much less enjoyment, but I have gained much more in health. Now I can preach several times each Sunday, spend a couple more hours at the hospital the same day, and in addition

to this do some duties as censoring officer without feeling fatigued. When I first came to Milwaukee, I often felt so fatigued after preaching only one sermon that I had to lie down to rest before preaching a second sermon the same day.

A FRENCH PLATOON AT OUR CHURCH SERVICES.
ENOMS, FRANCE.

24. A MUNICIPAL WASHTUB

127th Infantry, American E. F.,
France, May 6, 1918.

I believe that I stated in a previous letter that practically every day in this part of the country is dark and damp and that there is some rain during a portion of each day, if not the entire day. Last week was an exception, as we actually had two days of sunshine. You have no idea what a difference it makes. I have always maintained that a person never fully appreciates his health until he has lost it, and it is equally true that no person fully appreciates the beauties of a day of sunshine until he has been in this part of the country or in some other country where the climate is similar to what it is here. I suppose that no one appreciates the sunshine here more than do women of this village. I think that the women here figure on about six days for the clothes to dry when they do their washing, at least that is the length of time the soldiers figure on when they do their washing. Of course the women cannot wait for a day of sunshine in which to do washing or dry clothes, because washdays would come too seldom if they did.

In this connection I must try to describe one of the most interesting places in our little village. It is what may be called the open-air community washtub. It is located in the village square almost adjoining the village church. It is of concrete,

about 30 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 3 feet deep. All the women of the village do their family clothes' washing in this tank. It is covered with a tile roof. In front of it there is a large watering basin where all the cattle and horses of the village are watered daily. The water in both places is supplied by a spring which is piped, and there is a constant stream of water flowing. The soldiers also do their washing here. No warm water is used by the women or the soldiers for washing clothes. When the women wash clothes they use a paddle with which they paddle or pound the clothes. When we first came here, we were wondering how in the world the women got the clothes clean without warm water, and we were wondering how the clothes would get dry without the use of sunshine or heat. But we soon learned that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. I believe that my friend Shakespeare said something like this once upon a time.

I have good and joyful tidings to relate. At last our horses have arrived, but no happiness in this world is unmixed with sorrow, and the sorrowful part of this is that the horses which we received in this regiment are not the same ones that we had in Texas. I presume that the horses which we used in Texas are now being used by some other units here in France. You will remember that the horse which I had the first time I was in Texas was named "Babe." The horse which the Government issued to me when I reached Texas the second time, I called "Babe the Second." I have named the horse which

I have now received "Babe the Third." He is a beautiful animal about 7 years old. He is dappled black in color and has a beautiful black mane and forelock and also a long, beautiful tail. In this respect he is different from many of the other horses here. The orderly wished to know if I wanted all these beauty spots cut off, and I said, "Well, I should say not."

Well, last night I had him saddled and we went out to get acquainted. Babe and I all alone. When we had reached the outskirts of the village Babe the Third took a notion that the grass, which was exceptionally fresh and beautiful, because of the constant rain, looked pretty good to him, and so he reached down and managed to get hold of a mouthful. Poor fellow, he hadn't gotten very much hay recently, and he got all excited about the grass and his eyes just sparkled. I really wanted to get to one of the other camps, but I happened to remember how eagerly I have been longing for some nice sweet Milwaukee chocolate drops and have not had that longing satisfied for months, and so I said: "Babe, old boy, we can't have everything we want in this world. Now I really want some chocolate drops and I also want to get to that other camp, but I suppose that you want some of the nice green grass, and this is the first time that we are out together. I want to make friends with you, so go to it old boy until you are good and satisfied." Well, I didn't reach any other camp that night, but I hope that Babe and I are pretty good friends. He got

the grass all right, but I don't expect to get any chocolate drops until I reach the United States again.

A few days ago I went on a motorcycle on an errand which took me a considerable distance from where we are now, and I entered a walled city for the first time in my life. There is a citadel and four walls before you get into the city proper. I had often heard of such cities and read about them in books, but had never seen one, as there is no such city in the United States, so everything that I saw was exceedingly interesting and novel to me. There are a number of such walled cities in France, otherwise I would not be permitted to mention this, as it would indicate the locality in which we are. I have mentioned previously that I shall not in any of these letters say anything at any time which will be contrary to the censorship regulations. That is why I do not say anything about the location or movements of troops or any military operations whatsoever.

25. WE GET HURRY ORDERS TO LEAVE FOR THE FRONT

127th Infantry, American E. F.,
France, Sunday, May 12th, 1918.

In America, today is commemorated as Mothers' Day. Here in France this date, May 12th, is observed annually for Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc) Day. Thruout entire France, special programs and services commemorating the deeds of the national heroine of France are arranged each year. As there are a number of French soldiers together with us at this place, I thought it best to recognize the significance of the day and its meaning to both the soldiers of France and our own American soldiers.

I had made arrangements to visit every part of my regiment today. My plans and arrangements called for eight services. It would have been impossible to make the tour with my horse, and so I was to have the use of a motorcycle and sidecar. But late last night military necessity, which, of course, I am not to give the details of, made it necessary for me to change all these plans as the motorcycle and sidecar were not at my disposal, but were used to carry important urgent military dispatches. Today was one of the busiest days we have had in the camp. It was impossible to have any public, open-air service for the soldiers, because every soldier was busy today. I knew about the change in the plans before breakfast, and so, in order that I might have

at least one service in which we commemorated Mothers' Day and Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc) Day, I went over to the mess hall of headquarters company before breakfast. When all the boys had assembled there was still some time left before breakfast was ready, and so I made up my mind I would

MOTHER.

conduct a short service. In substance, this is what I said: "Boys, I am sure all of you will pardon me if I take this occasion to speak a few words to you. It is about five minutes until the cooks will have breakfast ready for you. All of you know that I have always made it a point to conduct some kind of a church service *every* Sunday for the boys of my regiment. All of you know what is going to take place today, and you know it will be impossible for us to

have any public service in our regiment outdoors today; all of you will be too busy with your other military duties, and for this reason I must cancel the eight services which I had arranged in various parts of the regiment. But we are nevertheless going to have a church service in our regiment during the next five minutes, what I am saying now may not sound much like a sermon, but I believe in the sight of the Lord it will be credited with being a sermon, and I hope all of you will consider it as such.

"Now, boys, no matter how busy we may be, we shall always have a few minutes each day to meditate upon things sacred and to offer our prayer unto our God. I want you to do this today. All of you have been taught some prayers. Never forget to pray every day, no matter what the conditions may be.

"I want to call your attention to the fact that today is observed as Mothers' Day in America. You will pardon me, I am sure, if I tell you that it is difficult for me to say anything concerning the significance of this day, this year. Many of you know that my own mother passed away while we were in Texas, shortly before we departed for France, and that this will be the first Mothers' Day that it will be impossible for me to send my own mother any written message. I think all of you boys will understand, and I am sure that I do not need to urge any of you who have mothers still alive to write to your mothers today. I do not care how busy you are today, every one of you I am sure will find some time to write a few words to your mother before you close your eyes in sleep tonight.

"I also refer to the fact that from the French soldier's standpoint, this day is Jeanne d'Arc Day. Jeanne d'Arc is an international character. When we were children we read at school of her life. We are now in the country where she was born. She was a good, pure young shepherd girl, who believed she heard the voice of God calling her to go and offer encouragement to the armies of France when the cause of France seemed almost hopeless. The only thing that I want to say in this connection is that the power of her influence was felt because she was positive that the voice of God was speaking to her and that she was bringing a message from God. I believe that it is a wonderful coincidence that we are able today to celebrate Mothers' Day and Jeanne d'Arc Day on the same day. When you stop to think about it, both days have the same kind of a message for us. They tell us of the wonderful influence which good, pure women may have on the life of a soldier. Boys, think of this seriously. All of you will be thinking of your mothers today. Many of you will also be thinking of some good, noble, pure young woman that you have left back home, who is, as far as you are concerned, the American Joan of Arc of *your* life. I take it for granted that all of you will know what I am referring to, and I hope that all of you will think of the double meaning of this day and that it will assist you, by the grace of God, to be good, honest, pure, loyal, and patriotic soldiers of the American Army in France.

"Now, if you will arise, I shall offer a short prayer and pronounce the benediction."

26. THE FLARES OF NO MAN'S LAND AND THE RUMBLE OF THE BIG GUNS

127th Infantry, France,
May 19, 1918.

Today is Pentecost, or Whitsunday. Where we are now located it is forbidden to have any large outdoor gatherings as we are within easy range of the German guns, and German aeroplanes may come sailing over us at any time. Nevertheless I managed to have an outdoor church service under the trees while the boys were at mess. I told them that I would preach a short sermon to them if they would remain, and I am happy to say that all the boys seemed just as anxious to have the service as I was myself.

In the letter which I wrote you a week ago tonight I intimated that our regiment would be exceptionally busy. I could not, of course, tell you in that letter why we were going to be exceptionally busy, because it is contrary to the postal censorship rules to give any information as to future military movements. As these movements have taken place since the time of my last letter, I am now at liberty to state that the reason why we were going to be busy at that time was that we were about to move.

We are now far from where we were when I wrote the last letter. During the past week we moved twice. The first move we made we marched one day and, after resting a few hours during the night,

we marched half a day and boarded the train and travelled for about ten hours. When we entrained at this point we reached the area where it is necessary to have our gas masks and steel helmets handy at all times. When we left the train, one of the officers told me that the city we were then in could easily be reached by the German cannon, and might be bombarded at any time. In case of a bombardment the citizens could use a dugout a short distance away, and then he indicated where it was. Within an hour we were on the march again, and we were getting nearer and nearer to the German lines. We marched thru a comparatively large city, and I can remember how strange it seemed to me to see large buildings without a single light, all the shutters being closed. There was absolutely no light in the street. The city was of course darkened because in case there had been lights it would have been easy for aeroplanes to make a night raid. Every few minutes we would halt, and then the guide would indicate the direction and we would again advance. There was no singing and no noise except the noise made by the hoofs of the horses and the rattling of the wagons used for hauling the baggage, ammunition, guns, and other equipment. We rode over drawbridges and thru an ancient fortification. After a while we could hear a distant rumbling. Was it the noise of the moving troops, or was it the distant rumbling of the big German guns? I was not positive, but when we halted again I asked one of our officers riding at my side, and he told me that none of our troops were in front of us, and that the dull

noise which we heard was the sound of the big guns at the front. At last we were going to where things were actually happening, or as the boys say, to a place where there was "something doing." After a time we saw lights in the sky; at first I thought these were lights in farmhouses such as might be caused if a person brings a lamp into a room and then either removes or puts out the light in a short time. But I thought these lights were somewhat different, and so when I had the opportunity I again asked one of our officers, who told me that the lights were flares or rockets which were shot up in the air at night to illuminate No Man's Land and the trenches at the front.

We reached our destination at about two o'clock in the morning. After resting a few hours we got up, and it was at this point that we saw German aeroplanes flying over us for the first time. Whenever they came in sight we were told to get under trees or some kind of shelter because these planes were for observation purposes, sent out in order to notice whether or not any new troops were moving into the area. Naturally, when we first saw these aeroplanes we were extremely curious and interested in them, but later on the appearance of aeroplanes from the German lines would scarcely attract any attention, unless in addition to the noise of the motor, we could hear the firing of anti-aircraft guns of the French, and then we would look to see whether or not the shots had reached their mark. The shots which were fired looked like puffs of cotton, and it was an interesting and curious sight to see an aero-

plane high in the air like a bird and then hear the booming of the anti-aircraft guns and then in front of, behind, and on both sides of the human bird there would be these white puffs of smoke. Oftentimes there would be two or three German planes. Later on even this would not be exciting enough to attract attention, for we were soon to see both French and German aeroplanes above us at the same time. Then, instead of the booming of the anti-aircraft guns and the puffs of white smoke, there would be the rapid fire from machine guns in the air far above us, and we knew that a battle was taking place in the air between French and German planes, both of which were armed with machine guns.

After remaining at this point three days, we left there last night and marched to the point where I am writing this letter this morning, which is, of course, still nearer to the front line trenches.

27. IN THE FRONT LINE TRENCHES IN ALSACE—OUR FIRST BOY KILLED IN ACTION

127th Inf. N. G., American E. F.,
France, Tuesday, May 28, 1919.

During the time which has intervened since the last letter I wrote you a week ago, we have had a number of experiences, some of which I am not permitted to mention in my letter, because they are of such a nature that it would be contrary to the postal censorship regulations to describe them.

During no week since I left home have I realized that we are at war more than I do at the present time. In order that you may not become frightened I want to say that thus far our regiment has been unusually fortunate. It has not become necessary for us to retreat at any time, and we have lost only one man killed in action. It is contrary to censorship rules to refer to any casualties, except those which have already been mentioned in the official dispatches, but I shall not let this letter enter the mail until the name of this first boy killed in our regiment has already been mentioned in the official dispatches, and for that reason I can mention his name in this letter. I was in the front line trenches the day he was killed. His name is Pvt. Kenneth Counter. I am not allowed to give the name of his company, because the name of the company is not given in the official dispatches. He was a member of my

regiment; he was not, however, a Milwaukee boy. Perhaps you would like to know something about how I conducted the funeral of the first boy who was killed in action. He was buried in a military cemetery just outside of the village and back of the front line. This is a village which is frequently sub-

PREACHING FUNERAL SERMON AT THE FRONT UNDER TREES IN ORDER NOT TO BE SEEN BY GERMAN AEROPLANES. AT HAGENBACH, ALSACE-LORRAINE.

jected to shell fire, and the German aeroplanes are hovering over it practically every day and sometimes many times a day. For this reason it is forbidden by military authorities to have any large number of troops march on the streets or assemble at any point where they can be observed. We were, however, permitted to have a guard of honor for this soldier. I shall describe briefly the funeral. The casket

was a plain, unpainted wooden casket which had been made by the French soldiers. The French keep five of these caskets on hand in this village at all times. In place of a hearse we had a French two-wheeled cart with large wheels, drawn by one horse. In accordance with the French custom, there were two French flags fastened to the front of the cart. I was fortunate enough to have with me a large American flag which had been given me by the officers of the navy and which had been used for the first time at the burial at sea, at which I officiated, as mentioned in a previous letter. This flag was put over the dead soldier's casket in the cart. I marched in front of the cart as we proceeded down the village street. On either side of the cart there were four American soldiers. This squad of eight was of course the guard of honor. The French authorities also furnished a guard of honor of equal number. These marched in the rear of the cart. All of us wore our steel helmets, and we had our gas masks in the alert position. The gas masks must always be worn in the alert position at a point as near the front line trenches as this. When we reached the entrance to the cemetery we paused and took our places in a sheltered spot under some trees where we could not be observed by aeroplanes, where a number of other soldiers had assembled. The major in charge of the battalion and a number of officers were also present. My chaplain's flag was fastened to one of the trees, but in such a way that it could not be seen from German aeroplanes. I preached a sermon; it was one of the

most difficut occasions at which I have ever preached, but I do not think that anyone could detect it in my voice. When the sermon was over, I said that it would be necessary for all the others to remain under cover, while only the soldiers who were required to lower the body into the grave and I went over to the grave in order to commit the body to its last resting place. At the grave I read the whole burial ritual. I had prepared in advance a wooden cross; on this was inscribed the soldier's name, his company, and his regiment, and above the three letters R. I. P. I expect you all know that these letters stand for three Latin words which in English mean "Rest In Peace."

28. CHURCH SERVICES AT THE FRONT

127th Infantry, American E. F.,
France, Monday, June 3, 1918.

I am having quite a varied program. Every Sunday, of course, I conduct some kind of a church service. Some of the services I conduct have not the outward appearance of a church service. None of them are conducted in a church building, and about the only thing which has any religious appearance is the chaplain's flag, which I always have with me at a service. By the way, the chaplain's flag which I am still using is the first one I received from the Government when I was chaplain of the 1st Wisconsin Infantry, and now I would not part with it for anything in the world. It is about the only thing I have left of the equipment I took from Milwaukee. I have purchased new uniforms a couple of times, and I have lost a number of things in different camps. I have always worried that sometime or other I would forget this flag. I have had it with me and used it at church services at Camp Douglas, Wisconsin, and on troop trains, and on a 215 mile hike in Texas, where I had it in front of my shelter tent every night. I have used it at services in many parts of Texas two seasons; at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, Camp Merritt, N. J., at several services; in the hold of the troop ship on the Atlantic, at a burial at sea, and now in possibly twenty-five villages or camps or cantonments in France; and

at a number of military funerals, so that you can understand how much I have grown attached to this sacred emblem, which has an interesting history.

Two or three times officers have tried to play a joke on me by hiding it, but I have a reserve flag in case the original flag should become lost. I be-

SUNDAY CHURCH SERVICES IN WOODS NEAR GERMAN FRONT LINES.

lieve, however, that it would almost break my heart if I should lose it. I desire to take it back with me and put it in front of my church, where you have seen it two or three times on previous occasions when military services were conducted.

Let me see, I have gotten off the subject, I believe. I was telling you about the fact that I always try to have some kind of church service, but that the only

thing which gives it the appearance of a church service is the fact that my flag is used. I also stated that it is never possible to have our military service conducted in a church. Neither is it possible for us to have it in a large open space outdoors, because it is forbidden to have large outdoor gatherings here

SUNDAY CHURCH SERVICES IN BALLERSDORF, NEAR GERMAN FRONT LINES, WHERE WE HAD ORDERS TO WEAR GAS MASKS AT ALERT POSITION.

at the front, on account of German aeroplanes. I generally work it this way: When the boys are assembled for their meals on Sundays, I go to one company for breakfast, to another company for dinner, and to still another company for supper, and while the boys are eating I make an announcement something like this: "Now, boys, when you get thru eating, I am going to preach a little sermon. It will

not be long enough to hurt any of you. All of you need it. You see in the army we do not get any too much religion, but I know that all of you are anxious to write home and tell your mothers that you have been to church. Some of you, of course, have an opportunity to attend a church of your own faith,

FUNERAL OF FIRST BOY IN MY REGIMENT, WHO WAS KILLED IN TRENCHES NEAR HAGENBACH, ALSACE.

but some of us have not. Now the church service that I am going to conduct will be something which will do all of us good and will not conflict with the religious faith of any of us. If there are any of you who cannot remain I shall not be offended, but I hope that all of you can remain."

When I get thru with this announcement some of the boys will probably say, "Sure, Chaplain," others

will say, "You bet we will," and still others, "Don't you worry, Chaplain, we will all be right here any old time you come to this company; all of us stick with the big show." Now I do not want any of you people who listen to this letter to get the idea that they are sacrilegious when they reply this way.

SUNDAY SERVICES NEAR GERMAN FRONT LINES.

I am sure that the recording angel will overlook any of this roughness of speech.

Well, at any rate, when the meal is over, my soldier congregation sits around wherever they happen to be, on a supply wagon or near a manure pile, or back of a house, or near the bank of a trench, and I start in with my little sermon. After the sermon we all stand up and take off our helmets and I offer a prayer and pronounce the benediction. It may

sound like a peculiar service, but I am positive that hundreds of mothers and sisters and sweethearts back home would thank God if they could but see the reverence and devoutness which these boys show in their eyes and by their every action during such a service. The boys in my regiment know that it is possible for a man to worship God devoutly and still be a good, courageous soldier in the trenches and upon the battle-field.

P. S. Regret that I cannot on account of censorship rules say anything more. I have been right with the regiment all the time. We have not made any retreat thus far.

29. FOUR HUNDRED YARDS FROM THE GERMAN FRONT LINES

127th Infantry, American E. F.,
Monday, June 10th, 1918.

Our regiment has now been occupying the front line trenches for about a month. Of course we do not know how much longer we will be in the front line, but even if we did know we could not say anything about it.

Sometimes regiments are permitted to go back for a rest after occupying the front line, but we have not had any rest thus far. I am of course not permitted to state anything about what sector we are in, or the number of casualties we have had, but I think I am permitted to say without breaking any censorship rules that we have not gone back a single inch, but on the contrary we have gained a little territory since reaching the front line. We have, of course, had a few killed and wounded, but not very many, and considering the length of time we have been here, we have been very fortunate.

I still have my horse "Babe the Third" with me, but of course he doesn't go into the front lines with me. I don't think Babe will ever forget the first time he was under fire. We were riding along on a camouflaged road, Babe and I, when suddenly the German shells started sailing over our heads. It's hard to describe the sound. We could not see the shells, but we could hear them as they shrieked in

the air over us, and exploded on the other side of us. Whenever Babe goes out on that same road now he always sidesteps. The thing that struck me as most peculiar was that French peasants were actually working in the field making hay, while the shells were shrieking thru the air above them. I had

THE AUTHOR ON CAMOUFLAGED ROAD WHERE HE HEARD GERMAN SHELLS WHISTLE OVERHEAD FOR THE FIRST TIME.

read about this in the papers back in America, but I never believed it until I actually saw it myself. On the day in question, the first time Babe and I were under shell fire, as we returned the same way a French peasant who had been working in the field pointed out to me a great big shell hole ten feet from the road where we had passed a couple of hours before.

When I go among the boys in the front line they always try to show me things of interest, and some

of the officers and non-commissioned officers will invite me to places which they consider of special interest. Of course, these places I cannot describe, as it would be contrary to censorship rules. One sergeant said, "Chaplain, I want to show you a place where a Frenchman stuck his head over the trenches

ONE OF THE COUNTLESS BIG SHELL HOLES AT THE FRONT. COMPARE ITS SIZE WITH ARMY RIFLE AT THE RIGHT OF PICTURE.

yesterday and was shot dead." I said, "Oh, thank you very much." Of course I was wondering whether or not the sergeant wanted me to merely look at the place or to stick my head over. When we arrived there he said, "Now, here is the place, Chaplain. Now you just stand right up here and look over the trench, and you can see the German trenches very plainly, as they are only a short dis-

tance away." I was wondering whether or not the sergeant was anxious to attend my funeral, but I thought I had better do what he told me to do or else he might think that I didn't have any "nerve." Then, what do you suppose that sergeant did? He said, "Now you just stay right there, Chaplain, and I shall get you a pair of field-glasses." And he actually had me standing there with my head above the trenches while he went and got the field-glasses. When I stepped down I said to the sergeant, "Say, what was the idea? Did you want some other chaplain?" He said, "Oh, no, not at all, that Frenchman was shot by a German aeroplane that flew down low over the trench."

At some points in our trenches I have been only 400 yards from the front line German trenches.

As a matter of fact the boys don't worry half so much about the bullets as they do about the great big rats which are in our own trenches. One fellow told me that he was awakened one night by having a great big rat gnawing at his toes. Of course there are other animals in the trenches besides rats. Some that are not quite as big as rats, in fact very much smaller. The collective word for them and the name by which you have probably heard them called is "cooties." These have been described so often in books and newspapers that I shall not trouble you with another description of them. The thing which has bothered me the most is the odor from a manure pile a few feet from where I sleep. Near this manure pile is a pool of stagnant water and also

hundreds of flies, which bother me somewhat when I try to sleep.

The other day while I was in the trenches with one of the lieutenants of Headquarters Company, I noticed a shell in the woods, and I was just about to pick it up when he shouted to me, "Chaplain, leave that thing alone." I drew back and said, "Why, I just wanted to screw off the point for a souvenir." He replied, "Say, if you had monkeyed with that thing you would probably be singing with the angels by this time." That was an unexploded German shell. The soldiers call them "Duds."

A few days ago an unexploded shell, which was fired at an aeroplane, fell a short distance from where I was, and I have kept it. I thought that I could bring it back to Milwaukee with me, but some new regulations have been issued about the limit in weight allowed for officers' baggage, so possibly I cannot get this within my limit, as it weighs several pounds.

30. WE BURY A GERMAN NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER

127th Intantry, American E. F.,
Monday, June 17, 1918.

In one of my previous letters I told you how I officiated at the burial of the first one of the boys of my regiment who was killed in action. In this letter I shall tell how I buried a non-commissioned officer of the German army. He also was killed in action. He was the leader of the patrol which endeavored to enter our lines, but his mission was unsuccessful, as he was killed in the attempt. His identification tags contained the following inscription: "Karl Baer, Frankfurt am Main, Schweinheimer Str. 54, L. I. R., 81-7K-968." This inscription means that he belonged to the 81st Regiment of the Landwehr Infantry, Company 7, that his number in the company was 968, and that his home address was in Frankfurt am Main, Schweinheimer Street, Number 54. From the various ornaments on his uniform it could be seen that he held the rank of "Vicefeldwebel." This is next to the highest rank of a German non-commissioned officer.

I was near where he was killed and saw him just as his body was brought in.

At the funeral, I read the usual burial service, and I also preached a short sermon. Besides a number of soldiers there were a few civilians present. I have referred to the fact that it was

in perfect harmony with military regulations to bury any soldier who was killed in action whether he was one of our comrades or not. I also said that it was very likely that the parents of the dead soldier would learn where he was killed and would come to this place in search of his grave. I requested the civilians present, if they happened to be there when the parents came after the war, to tell them that their son had been buried with a religious military service. A marker containing the details of the man's identity has been placed over the grave.

I also mentioned in my sermon that every man has an immortal soul which is exceptionally precious in the sight of God.

31. BATTLES IN THE AIR

127th Infantry, American E. F.,
Monday, June 24, 1918.

We have now been occupying the front line trenches for over a month, and during that time have seen plenty of excitement. Whenever it is a clear day we are sure that the aeroplanes from both sides will make trips across the lines for observation purposes. Whenever the German planes come directly over our heads the signal is given for us to get under cover, which means that we stand under a tree or some other object, because it is taken for granted that the observers in the aeroplanes will take photographs, and of course we do not care to let them know the exact location of our troops or how many soldiers we have in this particular locality. What they are most interested in is the location of trenches and batteries. By making photographs a couple of days apart and comparing them, they can tell whether or not any new trenches have been built, or new artillery emplacements have been made, that is, unless the latter are carefully hidden with camouflage. Whenever the German aeroplanes come over, our anti-craft guns "cut loose" on them, and then we watch the explosions of the shells to see whether or not they have hit their mark.

In addition to watching the aeroplanes on both sides we are also able to see captive balloons from both sides which are used for observation purposes. Frequently the aeroplanes from one side will attack

the balloon from the other side and then there will probably be a battle between the planes from both sides, as one side will defend the captive balloon and the other side will endeavor to destroy it with machine guns fired from aeroplanes. We have seen aeroplanes fall in flames after being destroyed.

HURRIEDLY LOWERING A FRENCH OBSERVATION BALLOON IN ORDER TO ESCAPE BEING DESTROYED BY AN APPROACHING GERMAN AEROPLANE.

Frequently the artillery will also open with a heavy cannonading in an effort to destroy the artillery emplacements of the other side. Sometimes aeroplanes are used to signal the artillery the effective point. They will hover over the place where they want the artillery to shoot and in this way the range can be determined. Sometimes the artillery shoots shells containing very destructive gases.

FRENCH OBSERVATION GOING DOWN IN FLAMES AFTER BEING HIT BY FIRE BULLETS SHOT FROM A MACHINE GUN IN A GERMAN AEROPLANE.

Ever since we came into this area we have been compelled to carry our gas masks on our person at all times, and at some points must not only carry the mask but have it fastened in what is called the "alert" position, which means that instead of being fastened to our side with a strap over our shoulder it is fastened in front of us, just below our chin. We are also provided with a steel helmet, but are not compelled to wear these helmets at all times, as in the case of gas masks.

I should like to make this letter longer, but have no more time just at the present.

32. OUR FIRST GLIMPSE OF GENERAL PERSHING—MY CONVERSATION WITH A WOUNDED GERMAN OFFICER

127th Infantry, American E. F.,
A. P. O. 734, France,
Monday, July 1, 1918.

The other day I saw one of our boys gazing intently at the rear part of a large automobile. Automobiles are very scarce here, but I knew that there must be something unusual about this machine, because the boys were standing in the rain, and as I could see the driver (who also wore a soldier's uniform) sitting motionless in his seat, I knew that there had been no accident and that the machine was not in any trouble.

When I came near the machine and looked at the small insignia on the rear, about the size of the license number plates in the United States, I knew why the boys were looking at the machine.

The insignia had four stars. It was the first and only machine that any of us had seen with insignia containing four stars.

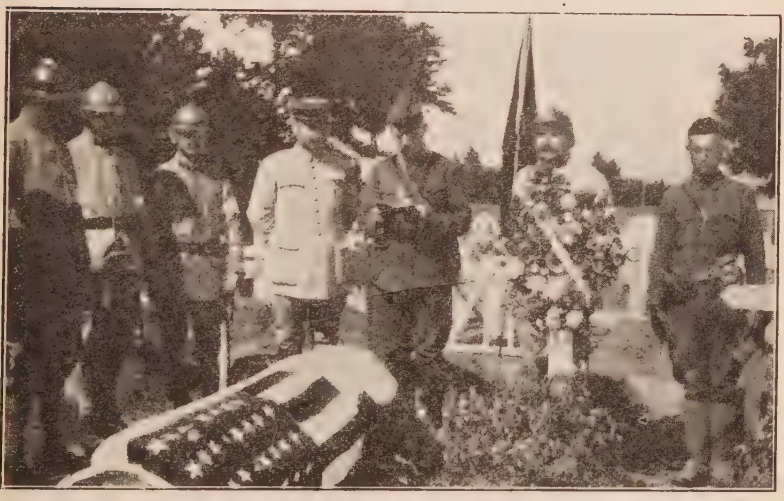
It is not necessary to explain to any soldier in France the meaning of those insignia. There are a number of machines with one star, there are also a number, but not so many, with two stars, but there

is only one United States Army machine in France which carries four stars, and there is only one American in France who has a right to wear four stars; and now I think all of you who hear this letter, and I also think that every American in the world who is given this explanation, will be able to tell the name of the great military leader who rode in that car. I joined the group who stood in the rain in order to see him. Every soldier will forget that it is raining if he gets a chance to see the occupant of the American Army machine with the insignia containing four stars.

I am sorry that I am not able to write anything more about the first time I saw this great general, but I do not know just how much it is possible to write without breaking any censorship rules. I thought, however, that you might be interested in knowing that I had actually seen him.

Now I shall change the subject and tell you about the first German officer I have seen since I came here. He was in charge of a group of German soldiers who endeavored to cross "No Man's Land" and enter our lines during the night. He did not succeed in his attempt. He was severely wounded by a grenade thrown by one of our men, and for a while we thought possibly he would not live. He and his men carried "flammenwerfer" (instruments which project liquid fire). He was taken prisoner, and he said that all the men he had taken with him were killed. He told me he was from Prussia. He also told me his home address and the number of his regiment. He is still alive and is of course a prisoner

in one of the hospitals where we send our wounded. I think the chances are he will live, but he will not be able to walk for several months. One of his legs is in a plaster of paris cast. He is of course receiving the same medical attention that anyone receives at an army hospital.



FUNERAL OF SERGEANT ARNOLD J. PETERSON. JULY 2, 1918. MORVILLARS, FRANCE.

33. HOW WE CELEBRATED FOURTH OF JULY IN MANSBACH, ALSACE-LORRAINE

127th Infantry, American E. F.,
A. P. O. 734, France,
July 8, 1918.

This year I observed the Fourth of July in an entirely different manner from what I have ever observed it before. At 8 o'clock in the morning I officiated at the funeral of one of my boys, and at 8 o'clock the same evening I officiated at the funeral of another one of my boys.

Both of them were from Wisconsin, but neither of them from Milwaukee. The first mentioned was Private Lester J. Crane, and the second was Sergeant William D. Purdy. In addition to reading the customary burial service, I also preached short sermons at the graves. In these sermons I referred to the fact that many funerals of soldiers had been conducted in order to give our nation a birthday, and many funerals of soldiers had also been conducted in order to preserve intact our Nation's Independence and our Nation's flag. I said also that I could therefore see no reason why it was not fitting to conduct the funeral of an American soldier on this day. I am sure that all the boys in uniform who were present thought as I did.

In previous years I have taken part in Fourth of July celebrations where blacksmiths' anvils and

powder or cannon with blank ammunition were used in order to fire salutes.

This year no such salutes were necessary. We are still where we hear real cannon shooting in real warfare, but we have been hearing these for nearly two months now, and for this reason the cannon

THE ALSATIAN SCHOOL CHILDREN AND FRENCH OFFICERS WHO ASSISTED US IN CELEBRATING THE FOURTH OF JULY.

which we heard this year, on the Fourth of July, even tho they were fired in real warfare, did not attract so much attention among our boys as the blacksmiths' anvils did when we were little boys and heard them fired only once each year in some village or country town back in the middle western part of the United States.

There was one feature in connection with the

celebration this year, however, which we welcomed with great joy. The man in charge of the village school is a French soldier. He had arranged a program in one of the villages by the school children, and one of the features of this program was the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in French by the children. It was one of the most welcome things we had ever heard in France. Every American and French officer and soldier present stood at attention, giving the right-hand salute during the song. When it was over the American officers were presented with bouquets of flowers by the children. I still have the ribbon from around the bouquet which was given to me, and I shall always treasure it as a souvenir of one of the most homelike festivities I have taken part in since arriving in this country.

34. SLIGHTLY WOUNDED

127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
A. P. O. 734, France,
July 15, 1918.

A couple of days ago I was where high explosive shells and shrapnel were coming at us quite thick. Another officer and his orderly came riding on horseback. One shell wounded the officer and his horse and threw the orderly high in the air. The orderly went to the assistance of the officer, and a second shell killed the orderly and a horse. Another soldier came running to assist the wounded officer, and another shell exploded and killed this soldier. Two more soldiers were wounded at the same time. I came along a couple of minutes later. A little while after I arrived another shell exploded. I didn't know I was touched, but that night when I took off my shoes I was surprised to find blood had soaked thru one of my socks. I thought: "Well, what do you know about that—a little piece of shell must have pierced my shoe." And sure enough! When I took off my bloody socks there was a nice groove cut in the top of my left foot.

I saw at once that it didn't amount to anything, so I just wiped off the blood and thought, "Well, tomorrow I'll put on a clean pair of socks and let it go at that."

At the officers' mess the next morning, I casually mentioned it to Capt. W——, the medical officer

in charge of our regimental infirmary,and he said, "Say, Chaplain, you may think that little wound is a joke, but, believe me, you will not joke about it if blood poisoning should set in. Now here is what you do. You go right over to the infirmary and have some dope put on to prevent blood poisoning, also a bandage."

I did as I was ordered, but I requested that no record be made of it, because it didn't amount to anything anyway, and I didn't consider it of enough importance to have it registered. The bandage did not prevent me putting on my shoes and didn't interfere with my work in the least. The bandage is still there, but I am not aware of it except when I see it at night. I don't even limp. I really hadn't intended to mention it, but some of the boys knew about it, and I was afraid they might mention it and you might wonder why I hadn't said anything about it myself. Besides, I have promised to write you a weekly letter and not all of the things which I could write about are permitted.

Assuring you that I am in the best of health, I send kindest greetings to you all.

35. MY COLONEL INTERVIEWS A CAPTURED GERMAN OFFICER

127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
A. P. O. 734, France,
July 20, 1918.

Our regiment has a new colonel as commanding officer. He is from the U. S. regulars. Our brigade also is in command of a new general, and he too is from the U. S. regulars. General Boardman and Colonel Lee who have been in command ever since we left the U. S. are both exceptionally able officers, but have requested to be relieved owing to the condition of their health. Col. Lee has been my commanding officer and has been exceedingly kind to me. Before leaving he requested me to greet all of the boys from him. Every officer and man in the regiment will miss him. Some time ago we received a number of soldiers from another regiment to fill up our ranks in the 127th. Most of these came from the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, and Montana. They had come to France before we did, but they had not seen any action as their regiment was broken up and used as a replacement regiment to fill in other regiments. We generally refer to them as the "Montana boys."

They are excellent comrades and soldiers and are right at home in our regiment. They are not in separate companies, but are mixed in with the Wisconsin boys in practically all the companies of our

regiment. They can easily be detected now, however, because a few days ago they had been on foreign soil long enough to wear the gold chevron (braid) on the sleeve, which denotes 6 months' foreign service and, of course, they are wearing it. Those of us who are from Wisconsin and who were in the first contingent of the 127th which came to France, will be entitled to wear 6 months' foreign service chevrons Aug. 19th.

Yesterday my new colonel said to me: "Chaplain, I am going to make an auto trip today back to the nearest hospitals and visit the boys from our regiment who have been wounded, and I should be pleased to have you accompany me."

I said: "Certainly, Sir, I shall be happy to go."

I knew most of the boys personally and found them in excellent spirits. We visited three hospitals. When we reached the last one, I said to the colonel, "Colonel, there is a patient here who is a German officer. He was wounded and made prisoner by our regiment. Would you like to speak with him?"

The colonel replied: "Why, Chaplain, I cannot speak German."

I said: "Well, Colonel, I studied German at college and I have had a chance to use it a great deal since reaching the part of the front we are in and I can easily make myself understood."

The colonel said: "Fine, Chaplain, that's great! You will be my interpreter. I should like very much to speak with him."

We went over to the bedside of the wounded

German officer. When salutes had been exchanged I acted as interpreter, while the following conversation took place:

My colonel: "Do you people of Germany know that the United States is in the war?"

German officer: "Oh, yes, all the people of Germany know that."

My colonel: "Do the people of Germany know how many U. S. soldiers there are in France at the present time?"

German officer: "On July 1st all the papers of Germany printed the announcement of Secretary Baker that there were 700,000 U. S. soldiers in France."

My colonel: "Do the people of Germany know why the U. S. has entered the war? Do they know it is because of the sinking of the 'Lusitania' and the continuous sinking of American ships and destruction of American lives?"

German officer: "The people of Germany do not believe the U. S. has entered the war on that account. They believe Americans should not have embarked on the 'Lusitania' after the warning which Von Bernstorff inserted as an advertisement in the New York dailies just before the 'Lusitania' sailed. The people of Germany believe that the incident of the 'Lusitania' is not the *real* reason for the U. S. having entered the war."

My colonel: "Why, certainly. That is just what many *think* is the *real* reason."

German officer: "May I speak frankly and openly?"

My colonel: "Why, certainly. That is just what I want you to do. I want to know just what the people of Germany really *think* is the reason why the U. S. entered the war."

German officer: "Very well, I shall be frank with you. The people of Germany think and believe that the U. S. entered the war for *political* reasons. Of course when a nation wants to make war some excuse must be given. Something must be used as a pretext. The people of Germany think that the 'Lusitania' case was merely used by the U. S. as a pretext or excuse, but that the real reason was a political reason."

After assuring the German officer that the people of Germany were mistaken my colonel closed the interview by saying:

"Tell him, Chaplain, that I hope he may be spared from suffering, and that I hope he may be properly cared for here at the hospital, and that I hope he will get strong enough to get up and walk about again."

Salutes were again exchanged, and as the colonel was exceptionally busy we both left immediately to return to the front. When we were seated in the machine and on our way back I ventured to remark, "I beg your pardon, Colonel, but may I ask if it is customary for two officers who have been enemies and been fighting each other to be so polite when they meet?"

My colonel replied: "I am glad you asked that question, Chaplain, because I want you to understand thoroly my viewpoint and position. I am an

enemy of Germany. I shall fight Germany and the German officers and army to the last ditch, but when a German officer or soldier is wounded and has been taken prisoner and is where he is absolutely unable to harm us any longer and is suffering, I do not believe in torturing him. We are carrying on a war against those only who are able to harm us. Furthermore, I asked him those questions because I have always maintained that it is my duty to learn the viewpoint of my adversary. I wanted to know exactly what the people of Germany think and believe in order to know what and whom we were coping against."

I should like to write a longer letter, but I really have not the time. I am crowded with many and various kinds of duties. I do not know whether the letters I am writing are of interest to all of you, but I take great pleasure in writing to you, and I shall try in each weekly letter to say something of interest.

With kindest greetings to you all.

36. WE ARE RUSHED TO THE CHATEAU-THIERRY FRONT

127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
A. P. O. 734, France,
Monday, July 29, 1918.

We are no longer in the place where I wrote my last weekly letter. We had been occupying the front line trenches of a certain sector for about two months, but we have now been moved to a sector which is much more active and where the warfare is entirely different. We are now on one of the big fronts.

Where we were before it was *trench* warfare. Where we are now it is *battles in the open* and trenches are not dug or used, because we are taking part in a big drive, and the idea is to keep after the others so fast and persistently that they don't get a chance to dig trenches—of course, I am not a military expert, but that seems to be the idea, anyway.

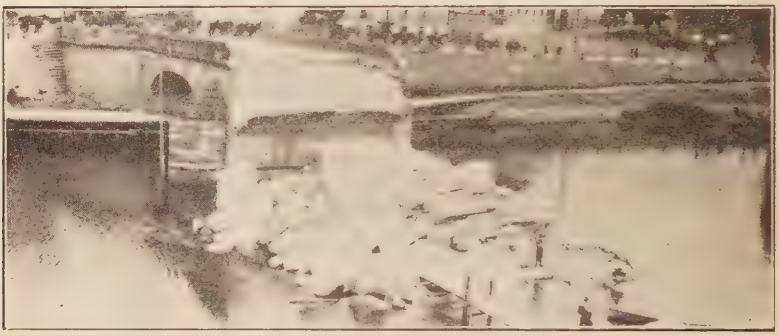
In order to reach this new front we have travelled for a week. I cannot of course tell you where we started from, or the direction we have travelled, or the name of this front we are in now, except to say that those of you who have read the daily papers have read it often.

On our way we went thru Paris, but did not stop —there was no time for delay, because we were urgently needed in a "Big Drive." We had no idea of where we were going.

WHERE WE CROSSED THE RIVER MARNE AT NIGHT ON HASTILY CONSTRUCTED PONTOON BRIDGES.

FRENCH AUTO TRUCKS IN WHICH WE WERE RUSHED TO THE CHATEAU-THIERRY FRONT.

We made part of the trip marching, part of it on the train, and part of it in auto trucks. We were in an auto truck procession or army transport train, or whatever you call it, which was—well, how long do you *suppose* it was? I don't know, but one of the motorcycle messengers was just standing at my side and he had carried messages back and forth, and I asked him, and he said: "Chaplain, that pro-



THE SHELL-WRECKED BRIDGE ACROSS THE MARNE AT CHATEAU-THIERRY.

cession was 10 miles long." I said, "Now, look here, my boy, you are talking to your chaplain. I am writing to my congregation. Get that? I don't want to tell them a lie, because I am going to preach to them when we get back. Get that—my boy? Now you tell me the truth—See? Because if you don't you will not only tell a lie yourself, but you will be guilty of making your dearly beloved chaplain (ahem!) tell a lie to his congregation and then the congregation may write and tell him they don't want him ever to come back—See? Now, my boy, you

CHATEAU-THIERRY, FRANCE. HOMES HONEYCOMBED WITH SHELLFIRE.

SOME OF THE SHELL WRECKED HOMES IN CHATEAU-THIERRY.

tell me the truth. How long was that procession of auto trucks?"

He replied: "Honestly, Chaplain, it was *over* 10 *miles* long."

Well, I believe him. I saw most of the trucks, but did not pass them, as I was in the procession myself. Every truck was crowded with American soldiers, and every soldier was a part of a unit which was going forward to take an important task at the front of a certain sector held by the Americans where the Americans are pushing forward.

This part of the journey, which was made by auto trucks, was over a distance of about 50 miles. It was after we had left the railroad. When we left the auto trucks we were (and are still) where there are no civilians whatever in the villages or cities. The streets are filled with tumbled down walls of empty residences which have been shelled by high explosives. The roads are torn up with shell holes and lined with broken and abandoned equipment of retreating and pursuing armies, and here and there is the carcass of a dead horse, and everywhere is the odor and stench and smell and flies, flies, flies of all descriptions and sizes—big flies, little flies—but all hungry and persistent.

We have crossed a famous river on pontoon bridges. We are getting nearer and nearer to the place where we know we are going to be in action in open warfare.

Yesterday was Sunday. Just as I was going to commence preaching we received a hurry order to move again immediately. So today (Monday) when

we halted in the woods I preached to the boys.

The boys were around me under the trees in a wood where we halted. It was a serious but an encouraging sermon. The cannon balls were screeching overhead during the service. My text was: "I will fear no evil, for Thou are with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me."

I did not wait until next Sunday, because all of us know that we shall be in a battle long before next Sunday. I have never in my life preached a sermon when I felt more the power of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

37. IN THE AISNE-MARNE OFFENSIVE

127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
A. P. O. 734, France,
Monday, August 5, 1918.

The past week has been the most strenuous and active week which I have had since I entered the military service.

Our regiment has been in several battles. It has been open warfare right in the open field and not in the trenches.

I have not the time to write a long description of what has taken place, as I am crowded with too many other duties, and the censorship regulations will not permit me to state the location or the number of killed or wounded or anything of that nature.

I am, however, permitted to say that we have been in battle against some of the most famous Prussian guard troops, also some of the famous Saxon troops. We have been advancing steadily against them for a week. We have learned which organizations we have been up against, from the captured prisoners and from the unburied dead which they have left upon the battle-field, and which I have buried.

One of my duties as chaplain is to bury the dead. This work is done right on the battle-field as a rule. While we were doing this, we were subject to bombardment from the artillery, and a couple of times we were subject to gas attacks and had to put

BURSTING GERMAN SHELL.

SOME OF THE DEAD ON THE BATTLEFIELD, LES JOMBLETTES WOODS, FRANCE.

on our masks. Aeroplanes from the other lines also came over for the purpose of dropping bombs on us, and we had to make an effort to get under cover as best we could while the bombing aeroplane passed over, and then resume our digging until another aeroplane motor could be heard or seen above us.

RUINS OF CHURCH IN COULONGES, FRANCE, ONE OF THE TEN VILLAGES WHICH OUR DIVISION RECAPTURED IN THE CHATEAU-THIERRY DRIVE, TQ FISMES CAISNE-MARNE OFFENSIVE.

The first time I heard the gas alarm given was at night just before our first open warfare battle. We were marching along the road and knew we were getting near the German lines. It was pitch-dark. Suddenly a messenger came rushing back. We were ordered to get off from the road and into the field

and lie down and keep perfectly still, and by all means not light any matches or attempt to smoke.

Suddenly, from in front of us, over in the direction where we knew the Germans were located, we saw skyrocket signals and flares go up and then the Boom—Boom—Boom of artillery, and then the Zip—Zip—Zip multiplied a thousandfold of the machine guns. And then some shells came crashing over toward us and someone yelled "Gas!" and immediately we heard in the darkness the order: "Put on your gas masks!"

Of course, all of us were carrying gas masks. We had been wearing steel helmets and carrying a gas mask for over two and a half months every day all the time. Several times before I had been where shrapnel had been dropping, but this was the first time I had actually been in a gas attack. We had been lying on our stomachs in a strange field on a pitch-dark night, shivering slightly from the damp and cold night air, and you may imagine I lost no time in obeying that grim order, "Put on your gas masks," especially when it was accompanied by the booming of artillery, the zipping of machine guns and the sizzling of skyrockets.

Since then I have been in several gas attacks both day and night and have heard the order, "Put on your gas masks," many times, but it has never produced the same sensation that it did the first time I heard it.

I should like to write a much longer letter, but I have looked at my watch and I must "get busy" with other duties. I must bury the dead.

With kindest greetings.

38. AT THE GRAVE OF LIEUTENANT QUENTIN ROOSEVELT

127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
A. P. O. 734, France,
August 12, 1918.

A couple of days ago I was placed in charge of a detail of soldiers for one day, and we were given orders to spend all day searching a certain locality to find out if there remained any unburied dead American or German soldiers. We had previously been over this battle-field doing this work, but this search was intended to cover a greater area.

In carrying out these orders we came to a place where there was a solitary grave on a grassy slope, a few yards from some abandoned trenches. Over the grave were two branches or twigs joined together to form a cross about three feet high. An ordinary piece of wire was used in place of nails to hold the two branches together. Around the grave was one row of small stones. At the bottom of the grave were two broken aeroplane wheels and a board with this inscription:

1ST. LIEUT. QUENTIN ROOSEVELT
July 14.

On a cross, which possibly had been placed there at a later date than the cross of twigs and the above mentioned board, there was this inscription: "Here rests on the field of Honor 1st Lieut. Quentin

Roosevelt, U. S. Aero Service, Killed in Action July 1st, 1918."

We had of course heard of this courageous young American officer who had gone over what was then the German lines, where it was reported he was buried, but we had not heard that his grave had been found.

LIEUT. QUENTIN ROOSEVELT'S GRAVE, CHAMERY, FRANCE.

We were not the first Americans to discover the place, as we learned later that others had seen it just before we did; but we saw it before any news of it had been published in the newspapers. The following day some officers from General Pershing's headquarters came with instructions to look after the grave, and they requested me to direct

them to the place. It is of course needless to explain that the territory in the neighborhood of where Lieut. Quentin Roosevelt fell and was buried has since his death been restored to the Allies by American troops. It was our division which recaptured this from the Germans.

39. GERMAN AEROPLANES OVER OUR HEADS AND COOTIES UNDER OUR SHIRTS

127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
A. P. O. 734, France,
August 17, 1918.

Today, those of us who were the first of our regiment to leave the United States are entitled to wear the gold chevrons or gold stripe on the cuff of the left sleeve, which signifies six months' foreign service. I don't know when we shall get them, but as a matter of fact there are other things which are worrying us much more than what we are entitled to wear, because some of us—I think I am safe in saying all of us—are wearing or carrying or whatever you choose to call it, some things *under* our clothes and in our clothes, which are also marks of six months' service, and which we are anxious to get rid of. I don't know how I am going to word this or describe it so that it will be fit to read in church, without having people feel embarrassed. But perhaps I may be permitted to say that I have not slept in a bed for nearly a month. I have not had my clothes off—not even my shoes and stockings—more than twice in nearly a month, and those two times I tried to take some kind of a bath and change certain parts of my apparel. On said occasions I also did my own washing—washed my towel, etc., in a little creek, and one of the boys said,

"What would your people say if they could see you now?"

You see, we have been moving about a great deal, and it has been impossible to carry our baggage with us. My baggage has consisted of one suit of underwear, two towels, two pair of socks, one blanket, and one bar of soap. These I have carried in my saddlebags. At night we sleep at any old place. In the open air if we are not under shell fire. In case we are under shell fire, we try to find a ditch or a dugout or a cellar. While none of these places would be safe in case of a direct hit, they are safe from flying shell fragments or the concussion, unless it is a "direct hit." In the territory we are in now, all the houses both in the villages and on the farms are deserted, and of course we are at liberty to use any of these houses. But as a rule we do not use them, because by their ruined condition they show very plainly that they have been "dandy" targets to attract shell fire in the past, and the chances are that the artillerymen on the other side have a nice little notebook with the exact location and range of every one of them. And then at night the aeroplanes can be heard "purring" (I don't know if this is a good word, but it will have to pass anyway, and I want to repeat it) PURRING—yes, that's it; the aeroplanes come purring overhead, and you are sleeping on the floor of one of those houses and someone next to you is kind enough to remark: "Say, Chaplain, do you hear that swarm of aeroplanes purring overhead, and do you know that this old house we are in can be seen in the moonlight as plain as day, and do you

know that all one of those fellows up above us has to do is to kick a little lever with his foot and in about two seconds there will be a hole fourteen feet across and many feet deep in the place where this house now stands, and you yourself will be *under* that hole?"

Of course, I *pretend* to be mighty cool as I reply: "Sure, I know it. But look here, old boy. Those fellows up there have a hunch that there is only a chaplain and another unimportant "mut" (here is where I get even) sleeping down below, and those bombs are mighty expensive, and they are out looking for bigger game anyway, so we are perfectly safe—See?"

That is what we *say,* but we do a lot of thinking until the "purring" has ceased. One night I was awakened four different times by this "purring" overhead, and occasionally a bomb was dropped not very far away.

Oh, I believe I started out to say something to the effect that just at present we were thinking more about the marks of service under our clothes than the service stripe which we were entitled to wear on our sleeve, which leads me to remark that we (some of us) are going to celebrate this glorious day—the day of our first service stripe, by taking a bath and having a "shirt hunt." A "shirt hunt" does not mean that we go out hunting for shirts, but that we sit down somewhere and *hunt what is in* shirts, and then, if possible, put on clean shirts and boil the other shirts.

"Eventually—why not now?" You will excuse me for not making the letter longer, I am sure, under the circumstances.

Tomorrow is Sunday. We have already made arrangements for two services in the woods, and right here let me say that I know that the boys will attend, at least that is what they have assured me, and I am certain they will not break their word.

40. CHURCH SERVICES FOR GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR

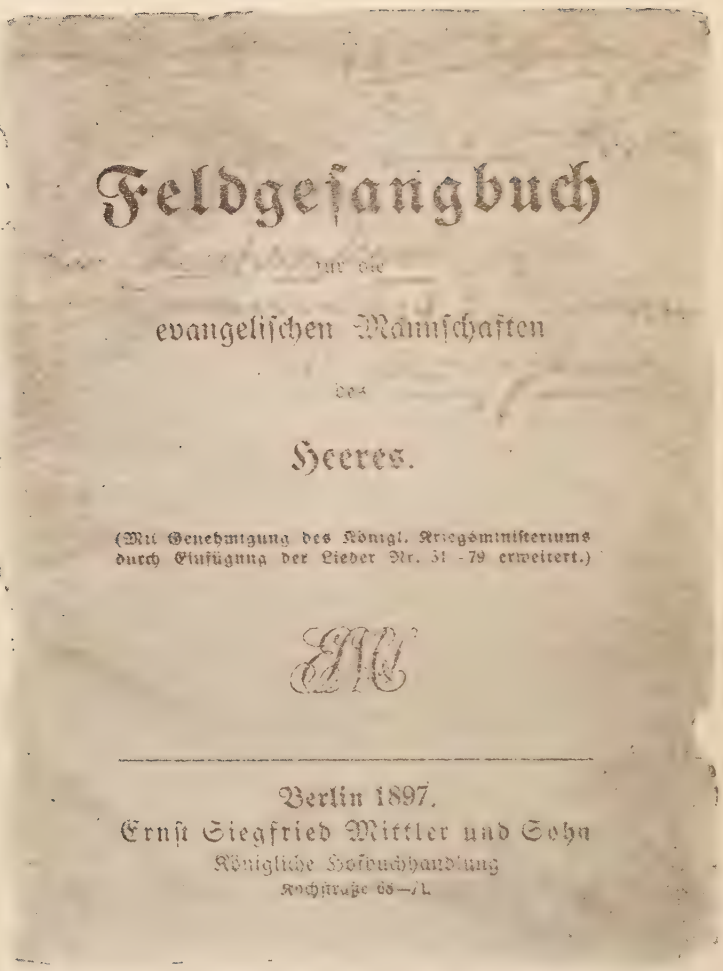
127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
A. P. O. 734, France,
Sunday, August 20, 1918.

I think most of you will be surprised when I tell you what I did today.

I conducted an open-air church service in the German language for German soldiers who had been captured and were held by the French army.

It happened this way. We have just arrived at our present position, where we are together with a French unit. My regiment is resting after a recent battle and a ride and march to another sector, where we shall of course be called upon for some more fighting. One of the Frenchmen here asked me if I wanted to go over to the prison camp and see the German prisoners who had just been brought in from the battle-field. At this camp, which is just back of the front lines, the prisoners are kept only a day or so, and then they are sent further back.

I went with the Frenchman. The camp was in the woods and only a few rods distant. It was an open space and was surrounded by two high wire fences. Armed French sentries were on guard and had orders to permit no one to come up to the inclosure or speak with the German prisoners, who were walking about freely on the inside of the inclosure.


Feldgesangbuch

für die

evangelischen Mannschaften

des

Heeres.

(Mit Genehmigung des Königl. Kriegsministeriums durch Einfügung der Lieder Nr. 51–79 erweitert.)

Berlin 1897.

Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn

Königliche Hofbuchhandlung

Kochstraße 68–71.

GERMAN MILITARY HYMN BOOK USED AT CHURCH SERVICES I CONDUCTED FOR GERMAN PRISONERS.

I told my French guide that I had studied German at college, and that I had used considerable German in another part of the war zone, where we had been located previously, and that on one occasion I had acted as interpreter when my commanding officer had questioned a German officer, captured by our regiment.

My French guide was intensely interested and said, "Say, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll go up and tell the French officer who is in charge of the camp; and, as you are a chaplain, possibly he will let you go inside of the inclosure and speak to the prisoners."

I acted upon his suggestion. The officer in charge was a captain of the French army. I told him what I had told the guide and added, "I don't want to ask of you any favor, provided the granting it is contrary to your military orders or rules. I should subject myself to severe reprimand from my own commanding officer if I did that; but if it is not contrary to your orders, and if you deem it proper for me to do so, I should like to go inside of the inclosure and speak with the German prisoners. I desire merely to ask them if they have seen any American prisoners of war in Germany and, if so, how those prisoners are treated. And as today is Sunday and I am a chaplain, I can, if you deem it proper, conduct a short devotional service in their own language. I understand that your French chaplains have occasionally also conducted religious services for German prisoners. I shall be glad to have your

French-German interpreter accompany me, in order to hear all I say."

The French captain was exceptionally polite and friendly and said: "I am very glad you have come, and what you wish to do is what every chaplain should wish to do. It is contrary to our rules to permit anyone to speak with German prisoners, but of course this does not apply to a case like yours. You are a chaplain, and are a commissioned officer of the American army, and I trust you implicitly, and in order to prove to you that I do so, I am going to give you permission to go in there without being accompanied by our French interpreter, who speaks German, and you may stay as long as you like and say anything you desire."

I thanked him cordially, but insisted upon being accompanied by the French interpreter who understood German, because I wanted a witness with me in order that the French guards and others who were outside of the inclosure and who perhaps did not know me might not suspect that I was saying or doing anything contrary to the French regulations. The interpreter was of course a French soldier.

You can imagine the surprise of the German prisoners when they assembled in the center of the inclosure and learned who I was. There were a large number of prisoners, but most of them had seen only English, French, and Belgian soldiers of the Allies. They had not been in those sectors of the front which were held by Americans and had not seen American prisoners. I found two, however, who had seen a few American prisoners in Germany

six months ago. These American prisoners, according to the German prisoners I spoke with, were treated as prisoners of war, but no special abuse was heaped upon them because they were Americans.

I also made a number of inquiries as to the duties and work of chaplains in the German army, and then asked the soldiers to hand me one of the pocket hymnals or prayer books, which is given to every German soldier and which practically all of them carry with them. (There are two kinds, one for Protestants and one for Catholics.) I removed my cap and all the Germans did the same, and then I conducted a short service, using one of the military hymnals and prayer books, which they handed me. The Scripture passage which I selected was the first one in their book. It was Psalm 121. I also read the prayer which followed it. And then I offered another prayer—the first one I have ever offered up in the German language in my own words.

When I had finished I asked them if they could understand me. They said they understood every word and thanked me very sincerely.

They told me that when they first saw me they took me for an English officer, because they were not familiar with the American uniforms and that when they heard me speak German, they were positive my parents were from Germany.

I explained to them that I was an American and that I was not of German descent, but had studied German at college.

They wanted me to keep the book which I had used, and I told them I didn't want to deprive the

owner of it, as I hoped he would use it. But one of them had two books and insisted that I keep one. As they all seemed anxious to give some souvenir of the occasion, I said I would appreciate it very much if I could get one cap button from each part of Germany which was represented at the service. Each section of Germany has a different uniform cap button. One of each of these was cheerfully given to me and indicated that my audience was composed of soldiers from Prussia, Saxony, Bavaria, Wurtemburg, Hamburg, Anhalt, and Mecklenburg. I have fastened these buttons to a cardboard and am sending them by this mail, so you may see them.

Before leaving I mentioned that I wrote a letter to my congregation in America each week and intended to mention the service. Someone in the audience said: "Please send our greetings." I promised to do so, and that is why I refer to it in this letter.

The official French interpreter who was present and understood every word, expressed his entire approval, and the French officer thanked me and invited me to come again on a similar mission if my regiment chanced to be in their neighborhood.

I have now worn my clothes day and night for over a month, as we have either been in engagements or been on the move. In all that time I have had my clothes off only one hour on three different occasions, when I tried to take a bath and change underwear. At these times of course I washed my own clothes. The only things I have with me are my army blanket, one suit of underwear, two towels,

and a bar of soap. At night I keep on my big coat, or trench coat as we call it, and wrap the army blanket around me and lie down in any old place I can find. All the houses are deserted and in ruins, and all civilians have moved away.

I have been blessed with the best of health. In fact my health is much better than it was before I left. I don't weigh as much as I did, but what I lost was superfluous flesh, and I am much more robust than formerly.

We have not been where it was possible for us either to send or receive any mail for some time, and I don't know when this will reach you, but I hope it will not be delayed long.

41. IN THE BATTLE OF JUVIGNY—ON OUR THIRD BATTLE FRONT

127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
A. P. O. 734, France,
Sunday, September 1, 1918.

We are right in the thick of it again. We moved into the front lines since I wrote you my letter, last Sunday.

We are now fighting side by side with the most famous regiment in the French army. I had often heard of this French unit before leaving America. We did not know we were going to be next to them, or rather right with them, and I was pleasantly surprised when I saw the distinguishing marks of this famous organization on the uniforms of the soldiers, as they took up their positions next to us.

Two of them came over and spoke to me. One of those who spoke to me was an American who had joined this unit of the French Army before America declared war. You can imagine how very happy he was to be near Americans. He was also very proud of the record of the organization to which he belonged, and told me of his experiences. He said if he could have known that America was going to enter the war he would have waited and joined an American regiment.

One of the new features in connection with the drive we are in now is the large number of "tanks" we have at our disposal. This is the first time we have seen them in actual warfare, and we set up a

mighty shout when we saw them come crawling along. They are so homely that they could not take any prizes in any beauty contests, but to us they were the most welcome sight and the most beautiful things we have seen in France thus far, for they will save the lives of hundreds and thousands of our own boys. They will save these lives because they

THE FRENCH TANKS WHICH ASSISTED US IN THE BATTLE OF JUVIGNY.

will do work which could not be done without sacrificing thousands of our boys in facing the machine guns on the other side of the lines.

Today is Sunday. This evening I preached a sermon standing at the foot of the grave of one of the officers of my regiment, whose body we had just lowered into the ground.

WITH THE MOST FAMOUS SOLDIERS IN FRANCE, "THE FOREIGN LEGION," ON THE SOISSONS FRONT, NEAR JUVIGNY.

FRENCH ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIGHTING WITH US IN THE BATTLE OF JUVIGNY.

HEAVY GERMAN MACHINE GUNS ON SOISSONS FRONT, NEAR JUVIGNY.

STOCKADE WITH SOME OF THE PRISONERS CAPTURED IN THE BATTLE OF JUVIGNY.

42. BURYING THE DEAD UNDER SHELL FIRE

127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
A. P. O. 734, France,
Friday, September 6, 1918.

For the past six days I have been on battle-fields every day, burying the dead. My orders have been to bury not only Americans, but also all the German and French dead which I found. I have been doing this under shell fire. The closest call I have had was today when a shrapnel shell exploded in the air over me. I was wearing my steel helmet.

For the last fifty days and nights I have had my clothes on all the time, except four or five times for an hour or so each time, when I tried to take a bath and change underwear. And believe me, I certainly needed it! I shall not go into details!

I used the expression "*tried* to take a bath," because I did not, of course, have any bathroom or bathtub or anything like that. The main idea was to get hold of an old tin pan and some water and some unoccupied space in a ruined house—for every building in this part of the country is a ruined house. The other day I took a bath in a ruined church. The doors and windows and the roof and the walls had been smashed with shell fire. It was early in the morning and some French soldiers were sleeping on the floor, but I managed to find a corner in a little room, which was partially filled with stones, which

had been knocked out from the walls. The church had not been used for religious purposes for a long time, as the village had been deserted by all civilians long before, and it probably never could be used for religious purposes again, so I did not feel that I was committing any sacrilege in using one corner of one of its side rooms.

BIEUXY, FRANCE, ONE OF THE SHELL-WRECKED VILLAGES WE WERE IN JUST BEFORE AND AFTER THE BATTLE OF JUVIGNY.

The other night I met with a slight accident, which was rather painful for a time. It was pitch-dark, and two soldiers and I were walking along carefully, because we knew we were near some old unused trenches. I was in advance and suddenly I stepped into a trench and dropped about six feet, wrenching my knee. I limped somewhat the next day,

but am nearly all right now. Where we are now, we are of course not allowed to show any lights at night. Not even the trucks or wagons are allowed to use any lights, and the boys are forbidden to strike a match or smoke at night in the open air. This is on account of the fact that any light, no matter how slight, would disclose our location to hostile aeroplanes, which drop bombs wherever they have reason to believe troops are located.

We have been advancing quite rapidly.

43. IN PIERREFONDS CASTLE

A. E. F., France,
Saturday, September 14, 1918.

My regiment has completed the work we were expected to do at the last front we were in, and are now at a camp some distance from the front lines, where we are filling up our ranks with new soldiers, drilling, and a number of other things.

We have been here three or four days. It seemed strange to get back to a place where we once more see roofs on the houses and windows and doors which have not been smashed, and people in civilians' clothes and happy little children playing in the streets.

It seems strange, also, to be where we do not need to wear steel helmets and carry gas masks constantly as we have done for several months.

A part of the trip here was made by marching to the nearest railroad point, and the remainder was made on the train.

Last Sunday we were marching thru one of the most famous forests in France, where I conducted an open-air service just before we bivouacked for the night.

On our trip here, we passed beneath the shadow of one of the most historic castles of France, and a few of us went up the winding steps and entered some of the great rooms of this ancient home of the crowned heads of long ago. The castle is not in

PIERREFONDS CASTLE, FRANCE, ON OUR LINE OF MARCH AFTER COMPLETING OUR WORK ON OUR THIRD BATTLE FRONT.

PIERREFONDS CASTLE, FRANCE.

use now, but is preserved by the French government and is in excellent condition.

With all due respect for the architects and builders and artists who conceived and reared this beautiful castle, and with all due respect to the French government which maintains it, I don't think you could find one single solitary boy in my regiment who would be willing to live there even if he could be surrounded with all the splendor of the courts of ancient kings—*provided he had to live there the rest of his life!* What's the reason? What's the answer? These boys are real Americans, and not one single one of them would trade the humblest home in America for the most beautiful castle in the world.

44. ON DUTY AT THE CONVALESCENT CAMP, MARS-SUR-ALLIER, FRANCE

Convalescent Camp, A. P. O. 780,
A. E. F., France, September 24, 1918.

I have received orders from the General Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces to report at a certain place for new duties.

The order came as a great surprise to both the colonel of my regiment and myself.

On my way to my new place I was informed when I stopped off at General Headquarters that a chaplain was needed immediately for a large convalescent camp for wounded soldiers, which thus far had no chaplain, and it was thought most advisable to select a chaplain who had considerable experience at the front; and, as my regiment had just returned, I was selected.

When I reported for duty at the headquarters of this section, I inquired for the adjutant's office, but upon looking up I found I was confronted by a man with a general's insignia. I saluted and said: "Sir, I beg your pardon. I have gotten in the wrong room."

The general smiled and said: "Not at all, Chaplain. I am very happy to see you. Let me see your orders. Oh, yes, you will report to (here he mentioned the name of an officer). You will find that you have been assigned to very important and interesting work, which will require all the ability you

have. Whenever you desire to do so come and see me, and I shall be happy to talk matters over with you."

It will please my congregation to learn that when my regiment had completed its work at the last front, my colonel sent a communication to General Headquarters in which he mentioned my work giving me much greater praise than I merit. He handed me a signed copy of his communication.

The colonel and all the other officers of my regiment were always more kind to me than I deserved. I am thankful to God for granting me grace and strength to be of some service.

When we had finished eating mess, as I was about to leave, the colonel rose and handed me an envelope, saying:

"Chaplain, here is something for you to read on the train."

Later he also suggested that I inform my congregation of the contents.

The envelope contained a letter to me and also the copy of a communication which the colonel sent to General Headquarters.

Complying with the colonel's suggestion, I inclose both herewith, of which the following are copies:

Hdqrs. 127th Infantry, U. S. Army,
A. E. F., France,
September 19, 1918.

Chaplain Gustav Stearns,
127th Infantry, U. S. Army.

My dear Chaplain:

It was with great regret that I read the order from our Commander-in-Chief which detaches you

from duty with my regiment, and sends you into another, and probably a larger sphere of usefulness.

The order came as a great surprise to me, as I had hoped to have you with us as long as this great struggle lasts.

In my twenty-two years' service as an officer of the Regular Army, I have not met a chaplain who held both the respect and affection of the men of the regiment more than you have, and I have met but few whose real efficiency as chaplains was comparable with yours.

Your tolerance of religious creeds other than your own, which tolerance was not inconsistent with your own very definite faith, has enabled you to have large gatherings of men whenever you preached. Your services have always been largely attended.

When we lost our brave men in battle you always had charge of the work of burial. You were very untiring in this duty, and performed the work of identification with scrupulous care. You often worked under shell fire, and frequently under other disagreeable and trying conditions.

As officer in charge of mail censoring you were very industrious, conscientious, and firm in the performance of a monotonous duty.

In all of your relations you have always been a loyal and efficient officer, and your bearing has been invariably that of an exemplar of the Christian faith.

This letter goes to you wholly unsolicited. You will probably never need my evidence as to your

efficiency, but it is both my duty and my pleasure to place it on record. This I have already done in a separate communication to General Headquarters, American Expeditionary Forces.

It is needless to say that the best wishes of every officer and man go with you.

Always sincerely yours,
(Signed) Russel C. Langdon,
Colonel U. S. Infantry,
Commanding, 127th Infantry, A. E. F.

The following is the copy of the official report on the efficiency of Chaplain Gustav Stearns, which was sent in special communication to the adjutant general, American Expeditionary Forces:

Reported by his regimental commander, Colonel R. C. Langdon, as follows: Is exceptionally efficient as a chaplain. Possesses tolerant religious views, but is not inconsistent. Commands both the respect and affection of the whole personnel. His religious services are always largely attended. While the regiment was engaged in active operations, he had entire charge of the burial of the dead. He was most painstaking in this work, and frequently performed it under shell fire. As mail censor he was very conscientious and industrious. In all his relations he has always been a loyal and efficient officer.

45. THE DELOUSING STATION—GOOD-BYE, COOTIES!

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
October 1, 1918.

In the letter which I wrote you last week, I told you of having reached the convalescent camp where I have been assigned to duty. I am the first and only chaplain assigned to this camp thus far. I understand that it is contrary to censorship regulations for me to state the exact number of officers and soldiers in this camp, but I believe I am permitted to say that this is the largest camp of its kind in France; so you will understand that the position is quite an important one, and I shall have plenty of duties to keep me busy.

I think I am allowed also to state that I am chaplain for a greater number of soldiers now than I was when I was called away from my regiment. The boys here are from all parts of the United States. Among them are, of course, a large number of Wisconsin boys and many from my former regiment. One of these is a non-commissioned officer in charge of a large number of men who are doing work about the camp, especially carpenter work, and he is exceptionally kind in providing things which I need.

As this is a new camp, we are going thru what in the army is known as the "mud period." All men who have been in new military camps will understand what I mean, especially those who have been

in Texas and those who have been in France. I suppose there was some reason for giving France the name "Sunny France," but from our present experience in this camp, one would not give France such a name.

Do not imagine for a moment that I am complaining, because wading around in the mud is just as much a part of a soldier's training as anything else, and we have had so much experience in this line now, that we can really do it quite gracefully. I have even learned how to slide down in the mud in my uniform, without saying things which could not be repeated in the pulpit.

The most interesting spot in this camp, at least as far as I am concerned, after I reached here, was what we call the "delousing station." This is where the darling little cooties go to sleep for the last time, and believe me, my condition was no joke when I reached here. The first night I did not go to bed at all. I thought it would be a shame to take off my clothes while they were filled with such precious relics of the front, and so I lay down on the cot without removing my clothes, thinking that I could keep all of the little darlings—but there was no sleep for me that night. The cooties had paid no attention to the sounding of taps, and they evidently thought that they were still to be on the warpath. So I had to get up and walk outdoors, and I kept walking back and forth in front of my quarters until 4 o'clock in the morning. I did not dare to tell anyone here what was the matter.

I got some new underwear and took a bath and

changed my clothes. I did this three times on successive days, but I simply could not get rid of those cooties until, in my wanderings, I came across the above-named room which I have referred to as the "delousing station," in this letter, but which is officially known as the sterilizing machine. The machine itself is about the size of an American threshing machine engine. There were two soldiers in charge of it, and they were very proud of their job.

I suppose those of you who hear this letter will imagine that I was embarrassed as I walked up to make arrangements for having my blankets and clothes put thru the process, but such was not the case at all. The boys were very eager to explain to me just how the thing worked, and at the time the explanation was given to me, I thought I could remember all the details in order to repeat them in this letter; but I am afraid I might get the details all wrong, so I shall not attempt it—at any rate that machine did the business all right, and you can rest assured that there are no cooties in my blankets or clothes—for the present, at least.

In my next letter I shall tell you how the church services are conducted in this camp.

46. "OUR MOTHERS THINK ALL OF US FELLOWS ARE ROUGH-NECKS—SEE?"

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
October 8, 1918.

The weather conditions were favorable the first and second Sundays I was in this camp, and the church services were conducted outdoors. The attendance was very satisfactory. The announcement of the services was made thru military channels, which means that notices were sent from the adjutant's office to the various companies and posted on the company bulletin boards. But, in addition to this, I also made the announcement myself to the boys while they were outdoors in the mess-line.

As a special inducement to attend my first service, I announced I would distribute a copy of a little eight-page leaflet entitled "Prayers and Hymns for Soldiers," which I had compiled myself and which I had ordered printed here in France. I did not have enough copies to give one to each and every soldier at the first service, but have ordered a new supply. I enclose a copy with this letter. These booklets were really intended to be kept and carried by the soldiers, but the service the second Sunday disclosed the fact that this was not the use that they made of these booklets.

Practically every one of the boys had sent the booklets home to their mothers. After all I don't blame them much. Of course, the mothers do not

need these booklets, and the mothers would a thousand times rather have the boys keep the booklets and use them. But here is about the way the boys would explain it to me:

"Now you see, Chaplain, it is this way—our mothers think all us fellows are rough-necks, see? She has an idea that we do not have any religion in

PREACHING TO WOUNDED SOLDIERS, MARS-SUR-ALLIER, FRANCE.

the army. Why, Chaplain, do you know that I actually attend church services more often in the army than I do back home, and back home sometimes when I attend, I attend because I feel I have to on account of my parents and sometimes when I attend, I attend because I expect to take my girl home after church. Still, if I write home and tell my mother I was at church, I do not know whether or not she

will believe me, but if I send her one of those little books which you gave us, why, she will just have to believe me."

I suppose all of you are aware of the fact that I do not use any prescribed liturgical form of service, and the service is non-sectarian in character. I presume that in the audience or congregation, whichever you choose to call it, practically every religious creed is represented. We sing the hymns which are most familiar to the greatest number. During the Scripture reading and prayers and the benediction, the boys are requested to remain standing. During the sermon they are seated on the ground. It is an inspiring congregation to preach to.

These boys have been at the front and have been wounded so it is unnecessary to say anything to them about patriotism. I should consider it entirely out of place. I should consider it almost a piece of impertinence for me to get up and tell the mothers that they should love their children. Mothers have already shown their love for their children by years of self-denial and sacrifice. The soldiers to whom I preach here, in this camp, have shown their love for their country by self-denial and sacrifice and suffering. For this reason, I do not preach to them about patriotism, because my understanding of patriotism is a love of one's country, and my congregation here is, of course, composed exclusively of soldiers.

There are no civilians present—neither men, women, nor children. At one service I had a notion that it would be a good idea to spring a surprise on the boys, and so I solemnly said:

"Boys, listen to the following announcement: During the coming week the 'ladies' aid societies' and the 'women's guild' and the 'young women's guild' and the 'church choir' and the various other organizations connected with the congregation will meet as usual." You can imagine the look of surprise on the boys until I added the following words, "in the home churches."

While it is true my congregation here is composed exclusively of young men, none of them can be accused of coming to church services in order to see the young women home, and I want to mention that to their credit. For that reason I have incorporated it in this letter. I want to give the boys credit for everything that is coming to them.

It may interest you to know how I selected someone to lead the singing. I announced a familiar hymn and then listened for some good husky voices, and when we had finished the first verse, I pointed out a couple of boys whose singing I had noticed and I said: "In the third row there is a corporal," and I pointed at him, "and on the other side of him there is a private," and I pointed at him. "Those two soldiers will come forward. They will face toward the rest of the congregation and they will lead the singing." The boys hesitated and said something about not being able to do it, and I smilingly said: "You are in the army now, and you are going to do as you are told. I am a commissioned officer, and you obey orders. Forward, march." Of course, I said that jokingly but it was sufficient, and I had two choir leaders inside of two minutes, and everybody was happy.

47. "S. W. A. K." (Sealed with a Kiss)

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
October 15, 1918.

One of the unofficial duties of an army chaplain, especially in a convalescent camp, is to be a sort of a walking information bureau or living encyclopedia. Whenever some new convalescent soldier comes in here and asks questions which other officers cannot answer, the officers who are questioned will generally say to the newcomer, "Now you go and ask the chaplain about that, and he will tell you all about it," and so the boy is happy. He at once proceeds to look for the chaplain.

Whenever the chaplain goes from one place to another in the camp, he will always find one of these newcomers who has been sent to him on such an errand as this. One boy will ask, "Will you please tell me where my mail is? I haven't received a letter for a month." Another soldier back of him will say, "Yes, Chaplain, and I haven't received one for two months;" and another back of him will say, "And I haven't received one for three months;" still another back of him will say, "And I haven't received one for four months." The chaplain will notice two or three more coming who also have been sent by some officer, and so the chaplain will round up a bunch and he will give them a speech something like this:

"Now, boys, I will tell you just where your mail is." The eyes of these boys will bulge out far enough so that you can hang a coat on them. At least they have come across the wisest man in the army—he is the man that they have been looking for all the way from one to five months. Lo and behold, the meek and lowly chaplain has for once come to his own! In the opinion of these privates, this officer with the Sam Brown belt and the crosses on his shoulders outranks any other officer, no matter what insignia he may have upon his shoulders, for he is the man who knows where their mail is!

They listen, all attention, and here is the speech which follows: "That letter which you expected your mother to write, or your sister to write, or let me see, one or two of you also expected a letter from your sweetheart. Sure you did, all right. Well, your sweetheart wrote that letter. She has been writing one every week, perhaps two, but I am positive that she has written at least one every week. She had your picture in front of her when she wrote that letter. She put in a few extra crosses at the bottom, and whether she wrote "S. W. A. K." on the outside or not does not matter much, because the "S. W. A. K." was certainly there. (I suppose it is not necessary for me to explain the meaning of the four mystical letters "S. W. A. K." When I commenced censoring mail I thought possibly it was a secret spy code, but if so there are a great number of American girls who are in this spy system.) All right; so far, so good. She took that letter to the nearest U. S. letter box. She pulled down the lever. She hesi-

tated a moment to see whether or not the box was filled. It was not filled. She dropped the letter in the box. She swung the little lever back and forth a couple of times, and she knew that the letter had disappeared.

"Now it had been taken charge of by the great United States government. She heaved a sigh of relief and was happy. That letter was duly collected by the postman, delivered to the post office back in your home town and started on its way across the great American continent. It crossed the Atlantic without being confiscated by any submarine. It landed here in France and is here in France at the present time. Now the great problem is, in what part of France is that letter, or, to be more exact, these weekly letters—one for you each week. Now listen, boys. You perhaps do not need to be told that there is a great world war on. The Allied Powers are making every effort to win the great war. Orders have been issued that rations and food shall be delivered regularly, and I can inform you officially that the mail has been placed by government orders upon an equal footing with food and rations, as far as the importance of its delivery is concerned. Therefore, I know that no one is intentionally delaying those letters, because if they did, some officers would lose their shoulder-straps.

"Now, the chances are that those letters first went to your regiment. From there they were forwarded to the base hospital—but you must understand there are many base hospitals here in France. The mail clerk in your regiment did not, of course,

know to which one of these you went. Some of you went to another base hospital after you went to the first one, then when you were strong enough to get out of bed you came here to this convalescent camp. Now, in case you could not be located, your letter went to the A. E. F. Central Post Office here in France. If you have not already done so, fill out a blank and send it to the A. E. F. Central Post Office. Your letter is either in one of the hospitals where you have been, or has been sent by that hospital to the Central Post Office, and you can rest assured that it has not been lost, but it will reach you.

"In the meantime, do not forget to write your weekly letter to that mother, or that sister, or that little girl back home, because you can rest assured that the one who is writing to you is just as eager to get your letter as you are to get her letter, and I want to tell you this solemnly that she is more eager, because each day many reports are published in the papers back home and you know as well as I do that she will spend more than one restless night if the postman back home has not brought the letter which she expected. I may also confidentially tell you, boys, that I have not received a letter myself in five weeks."

48. RE-CLASSIFYING THE WOUNDED

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
October 22, 1918.

The original name for this convalescent camp was Convalescent Camp No. 1. It was organized back in the United States for overseas service and was the first convalescent camp to be organized in the U. S. Army. It is neither a National Guard nor a National Army organization, but was organized by the U. S. Regulars. There are now a number of camps like it in France, but this camp is larger and has more soldiers than any other. We have twice as many soldiers here as we had when I first came here. I am still the only chaplain on duty attached to this camp.

I suppose many of you understand what a convalescent camp is; but possibly there are many who do not understand, and for their benefit I would say that a convalescent camp is a place where soldiers are sent when they are well enough to get up from the beds where they have been at base hospitals.

We have no bed patients in this camp. Here they are put thru a series of light exercises and later on short hikes, which are gradually lengthened as the patient grows stronger. As soon as they come here they are put into provisional companies, each of which is in charge of a medical officer. By gradual stages they are trained and fitted again into the life of a soldier. They are quartered in tents. We

have a large drill field and parade ground and go thru the usual military ceremonies such as are found in every military camp. All the bugle calls are sounded. We have not only a bugle corps, but also a fife and drum corps and a military band. All these are composed exclusively of soldiers who are convalescent patients.

It is interesting to note the rapid development of a patient after he reaches this camp. Of course, there is no fixed time specified for the number of days which an individual patient remains here, but every patient must go before the so-called disability board within one month after the time he arrives here. This board is composed of medical officers. It is the duty of this board to classify the soldiers, respectively. Those classified as "A" are sent back to a replacement depot. Those classified as "B" are kept here for further observation and development. Those who are classified as "C" may be kept here for a time, but as a rule are sent back to some hospital or some place where they will not be called upon to take part in military drills. It is taken for granted that they will not be called upon for any further military service.

As this is a new camp and as it is located out in the country, a great deal of construction work is going on. This includes the building of roads, the laying of a sewerage system, the erection of waterworks, lighting system, etc. Considerable of this work is done by convalescent patients, but the hardest part of it is done by an organization connected

with the engineers, and there are also a number of Chinese and Spanish laborers employed.

The other evening I happened to walk along the road, and I commenced talking with one of these Spaniards. I do not know a word of Spanish, and he did not know a word of English, but both of us knew a great deal of poor French, and I think we were both surprised to find that we had no difficulty whatever in carrying on a conversation. In fact, it was much easier for me to talk with this Spaniard than it was for me to talk with a Frenchman. I suppose this was because the Spaniard knew only a few words of French, and he kept using these few words all the time. At any rate, we understood each other, and I had a very interesting time with him.

49. A TOTALLY BLIND WISCONSIN BOY —WAS HE DOWNHEARTED?

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
October 29, 1918.

Not very far from where this camp is located, there are a number of base hospitals. Quite frequently I have been called upon to visit these base hospitals, in order to talk with the boys who are acquainted with me from my former regiment, brigade, and division.

The other day I was told about a boy who had been in my regiment, when I was chaplain of the 1st Wisconsin Infantry, who was at one of these hospitals. He had become totally blind while in action and was wounded in four other parts of his body, besides losing his eyesight. I went over to see him immediately. It had just grown dark in the evening, so I could scarcely see him when I went into the room. I walked over to the bedside and said, "Hello, there, old boy, does my voice sound familiar to you?" I talked a little more, and he raised himself to a half-sitting position and shouted out joyfully, "Oh, Chaplain, Chaplain! you cannot imagine how happy I am to hear your voice. Now I want you to come over on this side of the bed, because I want to hold your hand—and I cannot hold it when you are on the other side." I said, "Say, my boy, you are kidding me. Do you think you are talking to your best girl? What in the world do you want to

hold hands with a hard-boiled chaplain for?" He said, "No, honest, Chaplain—I am not kidding you. You know, it is funny that when you are blind you always imagine that the party who is talking with you will get away from you before you get thru talking with him, and I don't want you to get away from me. And if I've got hold of your hands I know you are going to sit here and talk with me as long as I want to talk with you. Now you will do it, won't you?" I said: "You bet your sweet life I'll do it, and I am going to sit here just as long as you want me to, and if anybody comes in here and tries to order me out, you and I will just naturally kick them out of here, see?

"Now, my boy, I have got hold of your hand, and I want you to tell me just how the mix-up you were in happened." He said: "Well, you see, it wasn't very much. We were working at some machine guns, and the high explosives were dropping around us, and pretty soon they came closer, and one of the high explosives lit mighty close. The machine gun we were working was smashed to pieces—at least, that is what they told me afterward. All I could remember is that I rolled over on the ground, and I thought one of those high explosives had knocked my old head off. You see, it hadn't knocked my head off, because if it had I wouldn't be talking to you, would I? But, at any rate, I remember that I was rolling over on the ground, and someone asked me if I could walk, and I said that I didn't know, that I would try. But I could not walk, and so two fellows helped me. I

could not see who they were. They took me to a first-aid station, and I was bandaged up. Of course, I didn't know then that I was going to lose my eyesight. I could not see, but I thought that my eyes were merely slightly hurt and that later on I would be able to see. Well, from the first-aid station I was taken to a field hospital, and later on I was put into one of those "Hommes 40, Chevaux 88" cars, and after knocking around for some time we landed in some hospital. From that hospital I was transferred here, and here I am. So you see, it wasn't very much after all, was it, Chaplain? and I am the happiest little boy that ever came over the pike. Say, do you know what, I am going to be sent home on a furlough. Sure I am. I am going to have a 30-day furlough!"

At this point I had to break him off. I could not stand it much longer, and I guess my voice trembled pretty much as I said, "Now, look here, my boy, you let me do a little talking. You said it wasn't very much, but I want to tell you one thing—you are one of the bravest and most courageous and most thankful soldiers that has ever worn a uniform, and that is the straightest dope that I have ever handed out to anybody in my life, and now you just remember that I have told you so. I haven't got anything to say about the conferring of medals, but I want you distinctly to understand that there is not anything on this earth too good for you. I am proud that I am from the same state that you are, and I hope some day to visit your home town in your state, and if I ever do, the people in that town will know

all about you. Say, what in the world do you think you are going to do after you get the furlough. Are you going to re-enlist?"

I could not help kidding him a little. He replied, "No, Chaplain, that is straight dope about the furlough. I am going to get a furlough, and then I am going to be sent east somewhere to a school for the blind, and there I am going to learn a trade, so that I can earn an honest living. Say, Chaplain, I carry an insurance policy with the government. Of course I wasn't killed, but they have been telling me that I will get an income from that, anyway. Do you think that that is the straight dope?" I said, "You just bet that is the straight dope. Now look here, my boy, the main idea is this—you are thankful to God and you are cheerful, and I am mighty glad that I had a chance to talk to you, because I want to tell the other boys about you, and all of us will be more thankful to God and more cheerful on Thanksgiving Day because of the shining example which you have set. Your work in this world is not over. You will be enabled to do a great amount of good in this world, if you will do everyone as much good as you have done good to me. I feel like a new man after talking with you!" And I meant every word that I said. I wasn't kidding him when I said this, because I was never more serious in all my life, and many of us will be more thankful to God because we know that boy! I have not mentioned his name, because it is contrary to the new censorship regulations to mention the names of killed or wounded.

50. THE LATEST DOPE

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
November 5, 1918.

We have no wireless station in this camp, but at least 100 "wireless" messages are received here daily. No one ever seems to know where these messages come from, and for that reason we call them "wireless" messages. Of course, all of them are concerning the war and when it will end.

I imagine I have been stopped from 50 to 100 times a day with the question: "Chaplain, would you please tell us the latest dope?" Now, if you tell a boy that all the latest dope is all wrong, he will look disappointed and crestfallen. So the wise chaplain will generally smile and try to hush up his conscience and look very mystified as tho he knew more than all the other officers in the camp, and then he looks straight into the eyes of the boy and says, "Don't you worry, my boy, but the latest dope is all right, see? 'Fin la Guerre, Toot Sweet.'"

Now, this is not French, but it is a form of French which every American soldier understands, and he at once beams on that chaplain and would be willing to bet his last dollar that the chaplain never had told a lie and never would tell a lie. Now, then, the question arises as to what do the mysterious words "Fin la Guerre, Toot Sweet" mean. Well, in plain English it means that the war will be *"Finished immediately, if not sooner."* Ever since I

have come to this camp I have made this prophecy, and while it has not come true as yet, I believe sooner or later it will come true; and no matter how long it takes, the boys will always believe that I knew exactly when the war was to be finished, but was oath-bound not to tell them.

Now, if the boys would only be satisfied with the "wireless" messages, which they get from me, all would be well; but alas, there are some prophets who are not so conscientious as I am, and so we have all kinds of messages floating in here from mysterious sources. Sometimes they come from truck-drivers, who have a mysterious look and say they have heard mysterious things in mysterious cities about the mysterious things that happened, and that the war will be finished in a mysterious number of days. Sometimes rumors are brought by patients who come here from other camps, and every once in a while an aviator comes sailing over the camp, and the boys will start another "wireless" message that he, the aviator, has probably dropped some kind of message or signal near our camp headquarters, telling when the war will end.

Every evening a French newsboy will come running up the road with papers containing news about 36 hours old. He never gets to the interior of the camp. As soon as he gets by the first guard, there is a wild scramble, and every boy in camp is yelling loudly for a paper. Those who are not fortunate enough to be able to get any paper, demand that somebody shall get on top of a barrel or a box and read the news out aloud. If it is anything about

when the war will end (and, of course, there always is something about that) there is a yell which can be heard over the whole camp.

Three times a day the boys stand in long mess lines and all anyone needs to do if he wants to see some excitement, is to walk near one of these mess lines and wave a sheet of paper. It does not make any difference whether it is a little sheet of paper or a big sheet of paper, or whether it is white or yellow paper, or whether it is folded or crumpled or flattened paper—because, if it is a little sheet of paper it may be a telegram, and if it is a big sheet of paper it may be a newspaper. But no matter what kind of paper it is, it is taken for granted by every boy in the mess line that that mysterious paper has some message upon it either written or printed, in either French or English, which contains some information about the ending of the war—and if the person with the paper solemnly folds it and walks hurriedly over toward the headquarters of the commanding officer, every boy in the mess line would be willing to give all the pay he ever expects to get in the army to read the message on that paper.

Well, this letter may not be interesting to you people back home, but I have seen the things described here day after day, in this camp, and if anyone were to ask me what are the boys thinking about and talking about, I would say there is only one question. I have given you the question and the topic, and the answer as near as I can give it up to the present date.

In order to be perfectly honest, I suppose I must tell about one evening when the news was intensely exciting. We had only one paper in camp, and I had that paper. The boys yelled for me to get on top of something and read it, and I did get on top of something. I don't remember what it was, but I remember I stood on something where I could look over all their heads. Every boy in that audience had his eyes riveted upon me and every ear, almost, was opened in order to catch every sound. There was such intense excitement that I could almost hear the hearts of hundreds of boys beating. The news did not contain the information that the war had ended, or even that an armistice had been signed, for up to the present writing that has not taken place—but it was the biggest piece of news that had been heard for four years. It was the beginning of the end, and a mighty shout went up, and in that shout there was greater joy than I have ever heard before in any shouting multitude—and I have heard shouting multitudes in many cities, and upon many college campuses, and for many victories back home, but there never was a shout which sounded in my ears like this shout.

For weeks the boys have been waiting and watching for the thing which you people back home have also been waiting and watching for. It is for the news which we know now will come sooner or later—the fulfilment of the prophecy of the joyful announcement that the four years' war has ended. I suppose that by the time this letter reaches you, no prophecies concerning this will be necessary.

51. THE DAY AFTER THE ARMISTICE—*"FIN LA GUERRE"*

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France.
November 12, 1918.

I can easily imagine the manifestations of joy and thanksgiving which took place in the United States yesterday when the news was flashed across the ocean that the armistice had been signed. You received the news undoubtedly long before we did, but you will probably be interested in knowing how the news reached us and how we celebrated the occasion.

We are out in the country quite a distance from any large city. There is no railroad connection here. The nearest village is about a mile and a half from us, but there is no railroad even in that village. The armistice was signed early in the morning altho the news did not reach us until afternoon, about 4 o'clock. One of the boys said to me, "Listen, Chaplain, the village church bells are ringing." At once there was great excitement in the camp. I started toward the village to find out if any official news had been received, and on the way I met a number of peasants. All of them were smiling and saluting and repeating the jubilant greeting "Fin la Guerre." When I reached the village, the inhabitants were excitedly decorating all the houses with flags, and the children were singing and dancing in the streets. I went to the village post office,

which is also a telephone and telegraph office, and the distinguished French personality who has the honor of holding the triple office of "postmaster," "telegraph operator," and "telephone operator" gave me the official confirmation which I sought. He spoke some English, and I spoke some French, and

SAINT PARIZE, THE QUAINT LITTLE FRENCH VILLAGE INTO WHICH WE MARCHED AND CELEBRATED THE DAY THE ARMISTICE WAS SIGNED.

between us we managed to exchange greetings and salutations. I immediately returned to the camp, and there the official confirmation had also been received thru our army channels.

Our commanding officer announced that all the officers of his staff would assemble that evening. He also ordered the bugle corps and fife and drum corps to report at his headquarters. It was about 4

o'clock in the evening, and quite dark when we started off for the village. Our bugle corps and fife and drum corps were in the lead. Next was the color guard, carrying both the French and American flags; after that came our commanding officer, who marched alone. After him came the officers of the

PART OF BIG CROWD OF WOUNDED SOLDIERS ATTENDING OUT-DOOR CHURCH SERVICES THE SUNDAY AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE ARMISTICE.

staff, marching four abreast. There are over twenty of us who are members of this staff. Those of us who were in the first set of fours used electric flashlights which were turned on the flags carried by the color guard. After the staff came the convalescent soldiers of the camp, who marched four abreast. As we marched along, the bugle corps and the fife and drum corps alternated in furnishing inspiring military

marching music. The boys also sang military marching songs, which had been used in many hikes.

It is hard to describe the excitement which was caused in the ancient little French village when we entered. I can imagine that there never had been a scene like it before in that village, altho the village is undoubtedly older than any village in the entire United States, and I can imagine that excitement like it will never come to that village again. This is a typical ancient village without any modern improvements. It has no railroad, electric lights, street lights, street cars or anything modern. I do not say this to cast any reflection upon it, because its very quaintness and quietness appeal strangely to everyone with any sense of imagination and appreciation for that which is artistic and beautiful. I have loved to look upon its ancient buildings, and walk its winding streets, and see its honest, industrious people.

But last night the transformation was something wonderful. The people were excitedly swinging candle lanterns, and while the tears were streaming down their faces, they kept on shouting and singing the three sentences:

"Fin la Guerre!"

"Vive l'Amerique!"

"Vive la France!"

which being interpreted means, as all of you know, "The war is finished, Long live America! Long live France!" and then would come the mighty response from our fife and drum corps, which did itself proud; and as soon as the fife and drum corps

finished, the village streets would resound with the songs of our marching column of soldiers, which stretched along for a distance which would correspond to many American city blocks. We sang every tune we could think of, it didn't make much difference what the tune was, or what the words were, but the main idea was that we *sang*. Everybody sang—and when I say everybody, I include myself. All of you who are in my congregation know that I cannot sing, but I will give you my word of honor that I did *sing* that night.

Well, finally, this marching, singing, drumming, firing avalanche arrived at the end of the ancient, winding streets, and then countermarched and returned until we came back to the center of the village, where the village mayor resides. In front of his house there is a high iron fence. The entire fence was covered with various illuminated devices. Here we stopped, and my commanding officer ordered me to go in and inform "His Honor, the "Mayor" that the Commanding Officer of the Convalescent Camp was outside and desired to bring him greetings and felicitations.

This was some job, believe me! I could have managed this job if it could have been attended to in English, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, or German, but my vocabulary in French is still very limited. But I have aimed to be a typical American soldier, and any soldier who has one foreign service gold stripe on his left sleeve is willing to undertake speaking French on any occasion, for any purpose whatsoever, and it makes no difference to him whether he is talking to a soldier or a civilian—for every Amer-

ican soldier has a certain number of French words which he is able to use, and he will rattle off each of these, one after another, in the hope that the party to whom he is talking will be duly impressed that the party who is speaking is a very high, up-ranking personage or potentate who is bringing a very important command or message.

So, with this high and exalted view of myself, my message, and the occasion, I boldly marched forth and formally presented myself at the iron gate in front of the courtyard of the village mayor's mansion. I repeated the mystical French words "Amerique, officier," and the gates swung open, and then I said in French that I wanted to see the mayor. I was taken to the mansion. On the way to the door I managed to put together enough French words to comply with my commander's orders. I had this nicely rehearsed when I was confronted with someone else. Instead of being a Frenchman it was a beautiful French *woman*. Now, whether you will believe it or not, it is so long since I have spoken to women that I have entirely forgotten how it is done and when you add, that here was a woman who I thought could speak only a foreign language, the situation was very embarrassing, to say the least. But I managed to stammer in fairly good French: "Pardon me, I am looking for the mayor. The Commanding Officer of the Camp is outside of the gate and desires to see the mayor in order that he may give his greetings and salutations." It was dark, so that I don't suppose she could see how I blushed, but she heard how I stam-

mered; at any rate, she made me feel at perfect ease when she said to my great surprise, in excellent English, "The mayor will be delighted. I shall go in and get him. I want to go with you to the mayor, because the mayor does not speak English, and I shall be glad to act as an interpreter. I belong to his household."

The mayor duly appeared, and I had the honor of introducing the mayor and his sister to our commanding officer, and then the mayor delivered an address in French. All of us stood and listened very attentively. Of course, all of us looked so wise and serious that I can imagine the mayor thought we understood every word he said. The applause which we gave him and the cheering which we gave him when he finished, was enough to make the heart of any speaker feel happy. Well, after considerable exchange of greetings, we again sallied forth amid much music and singing thru the village streets, and returned to our camp. It was the happiest day we had spent in France thus far. Of course, strictly speaking, the war is not really over; but as far as the popular opinion of everyone here is concerned the war is over—and if anyone does not want to get hurt around here, he had better not try to start something by saying that these peasants were wrong when they greeted us with "Fin la Guerre," when we greeted them with the songs and music which echoed and re-echoed from the quiet little village streets last night, when the news of the signing of the armistice reached us here.

52. WHAT THE BOYS WORRIED ABOUT

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
November 19, 1918.

This is just about the time of the year when the people back in the United States are worrying and planning and thinking about how they are going to send some Christmas packages to the boys who are over here. I will tell you one thing which will surprise you. The boys over here are worrying more about how they can send something back for Christmas than the people back home are worrying about how they are going to send something over here. I know this will sound absolutely unreasonable, but I know what I am talking about. Some of the poor boys are almost sick because they cannot do what they have been accustomed to do on former Christmases. Any number of them have told me their troubles. Here is about the way the story goes:

The boy will come up to me, and the conversation will run along something like this: "I beg your pardon," the boy will say, "you see, it is this way. I want to send something to my mother for Christmas, and also want to send something to my little kid sister, and also want to send something to my girl. It don't make so much difference about my brother, and my uncle, and a half-dozen or dozen other relatives, I could manage to explain it to them in some way when I get back; but say, how in the world am I going to explain it to my mother, and to my kid sister

and to my girl? And, on the other hand, what in the world am I going to send them? Here we are way out in the country. There is absolutely not a store in this camp. I would be perfectly willing to take a chance and run away from here for a day, in order to get to some town, in order to buy a present and then take punishment in the guardhouse when I get back. I would not care if they stuck me in the guardhouse for a month on bread and water. But say, supposing I did buy them some present, and supposing it was worth something, and supposing it got lost, then what, eh? Then they would not get it anyway, would they? Say, I don't mind this war a bit, but say, Christmas is Christmas, isn't it, Chaplain? And say, you know my old mother and my girl and my kid sister are going to be waiting every day for that mailman to come down the road, and if he don't bring home that Christmas present from France they will just naturally think that I am either dead, or else they will think I got stuck in the guardhouse for something else and wasn't allowed to send them anything—and there you are! Now, the point is, Chaplain, what in the world are we poor fellows going to do about it? Now, Chaplain, here is the way I have been doping this thing out. I am going to get a dandy souvenir before I go back, but say, honestly, do you think we'll get a chance to get home before Christmas? Wouldn't it be great if we got home at Christmas? That bunch over in England is already started on their way across."

About this stage of the game I broke the fellow off by saying, "Now, look here, old boy, you just

write that explanation to your mother, and your kid sister, and your girl, and you just tell them that you expect to be home mighty soon. Of course you don't know how soon, but you are going to take something along with you when you come, and it will be the happiest Christmas that they have ever spent when they read that letter. Now this is a straight tip, but remember to write that letter and write it before you hit the hay tonight—you understand, if you don't, your conscience will bother the life out of you. But if you do, and I know you will, when you get back home you just ask your mother, your kid sister, and your girl if I wasn't right."

At this point in this letter I guess it is up to me to take a little of my own medicine. I hope this letter will reach my congregation before the Christmas service, and I hope that it will be read not only at the Chief Christmas Service, but also at the Children's Christmas Service. I have made it a point never to prophesy any movement of troops, and for that reason I shall not attempt to prophesy when anyone is going home—and as I shall not prophesy when the other boys are going home, I shall not prophesy when I personally shall return. I might say, however, that the probability is that I shall be here, doing my utmost to make the boys happy—whether their Christmas packages from home come or not. I shall tell them how anxious the people back home were to send them packages, and I know that it will be easy to cheer the boys up. I think, however,

that *many* of the boys who are in this camp *now,* will be on their way toward home before Christmas.

But now I am thinking of my congregation and all the children at the Christmas festival back home. If I were to say I wish you a Merry Christmas, I could not feel that it would express all my feelings and sentiments. It is so hard to express in words just what I want to say, but I think that you all know how I feel and perhaps words, after all, are unnecessary. God grant that you may have a blessed Christmas. God grant that the angels' message, "Peace on Earth, Good will to Men," may be realized.

53. FOUR THOUSAND SOLDIERS AT A THANKSGIVING DAY SERVICE

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
November 29, 1918.

Yesterday was Thanksgiving Day in the United States, and the day was also observed by our American soldiers here in France. At 9 o'clock in the morning we had an open-air church service on the parade ground, and I preached to over 4,000 soldiers and officers. Practically all of them belonged to our convalescent camp. Among the distinguished visitors present at the service was the commanding officer of the hospital center, which comprises many base hospitals. He said that it was the largest military church service he had ever attended either in the United States or France, in his many years' experience in the regular army.

A small platform has been erected especially for the occasion just in front of the great camp flagpole. On the platform a "drumhead pulpit" was formed. This is a unique military custom which the commanding officer of our camp told me was used in some of the European armies and also used in the Civil War, at elaborate military church services. I have never seen it before. Each one of the boys of our drum corps came up to the platform and deposited his drum according to the directions of the commanding officer, and when they had done so a triangular pulpit had been formed. My chap-

lain's flag was, of course, used on the platform. All the officers present arranged themselves according to rank in front of the platform and facing it. Back of the platform, to the left, was the regimental band of the 150th Infantry which played the prelude just after the trumpeter sounded the church call. This band also played the accompaniment

FLAG RAISING AT MARS-SUR-ALLIER, FRANCE. FOUR THOUSAND WOUNDED SOLDIERS ATTENDED A CHURCH SERVICE AT THIS PLACE.

when the hymns were sung. Back of the platform and to the right was the fife and drum corps, which played military selections before the service commenced and while the soldiers marched across to the parade ground. All the soldiers present had been given the same formation which is used when outdoor military church services are conducted at the West Point Military Academy.

Just before the services I had distributed, thru the first sergeants of each company, copies of the eight-page booklet entitled "Prayers and Hymns for Soldiers," which I had compiled some time ago and had printed here in France.

The services were conducted under the most favorable auspices and, in addition to the other things for which I was thankful on that day, I certainly was thankful for the way in which we were favored by the weather. It had been raining practically every day, and naturally I was worrying because it might rain during the hour of the service. But it didn't rain. Strange to say, only a few minutes after the service was over—in fact, less than one hour after the service had been finished, it commenced raining again. I did not preach a long sermon, but I was told that everyone heard every word I said. Every person was exceptionally attentive. It certainly was an inspiring occasion and an inspiring audience.

Here is a copy of the official program:

THANKSGIVING DAY SERVICES

At Convalescent Camp, A. P. O. 780,
American Expeditionary Forces
France

1. Church Call ..... 9:00 a. m.
2. Hymn ..... America
3. Invocation.
4. Reading of President Wilson's Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, By Lt. C. H. Ager, Adj.

5. Hymn—"Onward, Christian Soldiers."
6. Sermon .....Chaplain Gustav Stearns
7. Prayer.
8. Hymn.
9. Benediction.
10. The Star-Spangled Banner.

Approved:
FREDERICK M. DEARBORN,
Lt. Colonel, M. C.
Commanding.

54. THE CENSORSHIP RULES ARE CHANGED

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
December 7, 1918.

We are now advised that we may mention in our letters what ship we crossed the Atlantic on and where we landed here in France. Before the signing of the armistice we could not give this information without breaking the censorship rules, and in my letters to you I did not wish to break any of these rules, especially because I myself was the censoring officer and never wanted it said that I took advantage of my position as such to give out any information which was forbidden.

It will undoubtedly interest you to know that I crossed the Atlantic on the "George Washington." This was originally a German boat. It now belongs to the United States and is in charge of the U. S. navy. You have heard a great deal about this boat recently, because President Wilson is at present crossing the ocean upon it on his way to France.

I conducted services on this ship three Sundays. I mentioned those services in former letters, but I did not mention at that time that the reason why I conducted more than one service each Sunday was because in addition to preaching to my own boys, I also conducted services for a battalion of negro troops quartered separately in the aft part of the ship. I could not mention it then, because we were

not allowed to mention any other organization in addition to our own. They had no chaplain with them, and I volunteered to act in that capacity during the trip, and each time when I had completed the church services for my own boys, I would go into the aft part of the ship and have a service exclusively for the colored battalion, and I looked forward to these services as some of the most interesting experiences of the entire trip. I especially enjoyed the singing. Those colored boys certainly could *sing*. I let them select their own songs. They were Southern negroes—the genuine plantation type, and were very quaint in their actions and the expressions they used. The song which made a special "hit" with me was "Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to bring me home." I had them sing this once or twice at each service. An amusing incident happened at one of the services I conducted for the colored boys. While I was preaching the ship rolled and the colored boys and I rolled with it and we were all piled in a heap over to one side of the ship. I don't know whether it was the "larboard" or the "starboard" side, but I know there were colored men under me and on top of me and "fore" and "aft" of me and on the "starboard" side of me and on the "larboard" side of me, and then the ship heaved some more and I hastened to get out of the mix-up before someone else besides the ship commenced "heaving." Did I stop the service? Not much! I have been on ships before. The sermon proceeded right where we left off *but* we didn't

sing "Swing low, sweet chariot" any more at that service. The *ship* was swinging *low enough!*

While we were on the "George Washington" a small daily paper was printed on the ship. It was called "The Hatchet." I was asked to contribute an article one day and did so. I have several issues of this paper, which I shall show you when I return. I also have the United States flag used at the burial at sea at which I officiated, and which I described in a former letter.

55. A TRIP TO MARSEILLES, NICE, AND MONTE CARLO

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
December 14, 1918.

According to regulations we are supposed to get a short leave of absence every four months, but thus far, altho I had been in France nine months, I had not had any leave until just now. I have just returned from a week's leave of absence.

After the armistice was signed, our commanding officer announced that the officers could take their turns for leaves, going two at a time and remaining away one week. He suggested that I had better take my turn now, so as to be back before the Christmas work commenced. Of course this was what I desired, as I wanted to be here in camp both before and during the holidays.

The place to which we were to go was mentioned on our leave. Mine was for Southern France. It was quite a long journey. It took me nearly three days to arrive at my destination. I had to change trains four times. The trains were very crowded, and it was impossible to get a seat—so I stood up most of the time while on the train. It took me two days to return.

But in spite of the inconveniences during the travel, I was very happy I could go. It was one of the most interesting trips I ever made. I saw many

beautiful, interesting, and historic places, which I have not the time to describe in detail now.

I passed thru Nevers and Lyon. At the historic city of Marseilles I stopped a few hours. This city is on the Mediterranean. I saw all kinds of strange boats and vessels and ships from many countries. The climate was entirely different. I could not imagine that it was winter. The calendar seemed to get all wrong.

I passed along the Mediterranean coast to the beautiful city of Nice. That was the city I was to stop in and make side-trips from. At this time of the year it is, without any question whatever, the most ideal and beautiful spot in France. From Nice I made side trips to Monaco, the smallest principality or country in the world, and saw the famous Casino at Monte Carlo. I also went to the Italian border. Every day I saw the snow-clad Alps in the distance. One of the side-trips was to a quaint little village up in the mountains, where very few Americans have ever visited. There is no railroad leading to it. It is very much older than Nice. It is a walled village, and I walked thru narrow winding streets and on top of the walls which surrounded the village; and in the old village church I saw the permit to build it which had the seal and signature of one of the old kings I had read about when I was a boy.

I cannot describe the scenery from this village. It was simply wonderful, wonderful and beautiful, beautiful.

But the week of beauty and wonders is over, and I am back at work.

56. FIFTEEN HUNDRED SOLDIERS GET GOOD NEWS

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
December 18, 1918.

There is great rejoicing in this camp today.

Last night we received orders to get about 1,500 men ready to be sent out of this camp to the United States as soon as possible. It didn't take long to get them ready, believe me! We had the required number ready early this morning, and they have already marched out of camp. There was a drizzling rain, but what did that matter? The mud was deep and sloppy, but what did that matter? It wouldn't have mattered if they had waded in mud up to their ears and if it had rained cats and dogs and pitchforks—Say! They were going back HOME, and woe be unto the man who tried to stop them after that order came.

The drum corps was on the job, rain or no rain. The bugle corps was on the job, rain or no rain. The boys who were going home were on the job, rain or no rain, and now they are still on the job or on their way or on the boat or some place, and I suppose by the time this letter is read in church, there will be 1,500 mothers back in the U. S. who will look into the eyes of the boy she has thought of and prayed for every day and every night ever since he left home—well, thank God, *that* mother will at last be happy.

And now of course the boys who are still left are trying to figure out when the next order will come and how many it will include, and this old camp is buzzing with rumors.

"Say, Chaplain, really, how long do you think it will be before the rest of us get a chance to go?"

"Now listen, my boy. I can't be positive about the exact date, but I'll tell you something that is absolutely the straight dope. We are all going to be out of this camp, and out of this mud and on our way home 'Toot-Sweet, Bon, Tres bien, N'est ce pas? Oui, Oui.'"

57. HOW WE CELEBRATED CHRISTMAS IN FRANCE

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
December 28, 1918.

Christmas week has just ended, and during the week I conducted seven church services, altho none of them were conducted in a church edifice or building which would be classified as a church. But of course this is not strange or unusual—in fact I have not conducted a single service in any building which has been called a church in all the time I have been in France, altho I have conducted services regularly and now have been here nearly a year.

Most of the services I conducted this week were the usual army services for my boys, where there were only soldiers present. We had no girls or women or Sunday school teachers or ladies' aid society to help us fix things up and make it look like Christmas, and in place of Christmas snow we had Christmas mud. But in spite of all that we had Christmas services with the singing of the good old-fashioned Christmas carols, and we had Christmas trees, and, best of all: We did our utmost to infuse the true Christmas spirit and Christmas cheer and Christmas joy into the heart of every boy in this camp.

Now, of course, Christmas is not Christmas without children. Of course, I am not referring to the Divine side of Christmas, but the human side.

Well, we didn't have any children at the regular church service—that was for soldiers—but we did have a special hour from nine to ten in the morning, and honestly we sent to a village ten miles from here and requested the mayor of that town to send us as many little children as he could pile into six great big army trucks, and the mayor called together a committee, and for one hour we looked into the bright, happy faces of genuine children, and they opened the great, big beautiful eyes in those nice, little beautiful heads and looked at Christmas decorations and Christmas trees and laughed and smiled and wondered and went away with their pockets filled with good things to eat and their faces beaming with happiness and their hearts filled with joy. Those little tots were in this camp only one hour, but it certainly made a big difference with many of us.

Two of the Christmas sermons I preached were not in my own camp. One was in a base hospital near here. The chaplain of that hospital, who had invited me to preach the sermon at his chief service, is very fond of ritualism, vestments, etc., and had arranged a very elaborate service. He had a processional before the service and a recessional after the service, which of course included a crossbearer. He had arranged a temporary altar upon which he had placed two seven-branch candelsticks with lighted candles. There were also temporary communion rails, choir stalls, and pulpit. He himself and the one who assisted him wore the usual vestments of the clergy of their church. This chaplain and I do not belong to the same faith, but we are

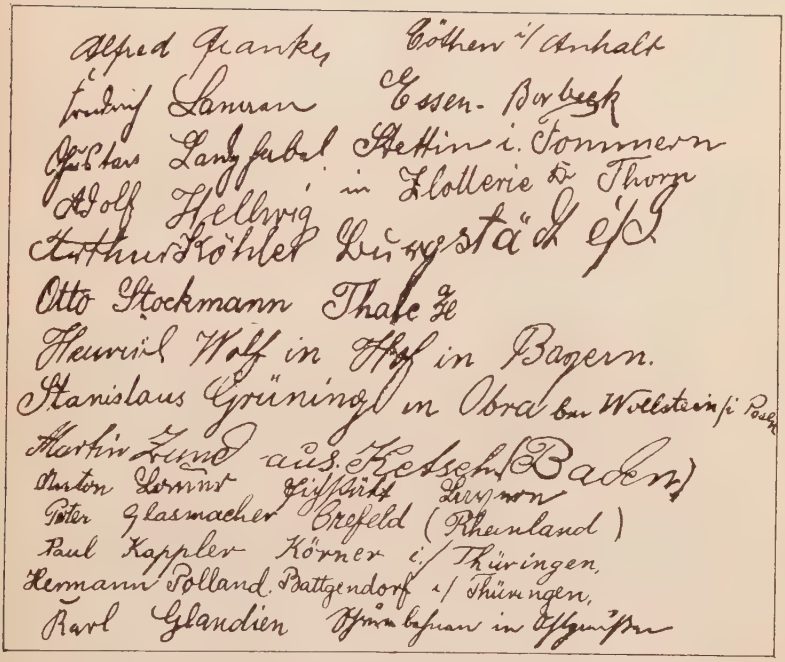
very warm personal friends, and he gave me such a cordial invitation to preach at his service that I did not like to refuse him altho I had to do this in addition to the services in my own camp.

The other service which I conducted outside of my own camp was a Christmas Eve service for German prisoners who have been wounded. Some of them were lying in bed, but all of them were able to take part in the singing. I conducted the entire service in the German language, including the preaching of a short sermon, without notes or manuscript. I should never have attempted to do this if there had been any other pastor or chaplain in the neighborhood who could speak German. Those present certainly appreciated my effort. I received a testimonial which each one has signed, not only with his name, but also with the name of the section of Germany where his home is.

On Christmas Day I also conducted a communion service in the Norwegian language at another hospital, some distance from here, at the bedside of a patient who was believed to be dying, but who has slightly improved since then.

With best wishes for a Happy New Year to all of you.

P. S. Present indications are that we shall be home in a short time, but of course we can never be positive of what may take place.


Alfred Franke, Cöthen i/ Anhalt
Essen- Borbeck
Stettin i. Pommern
Adolf Hellwig in Zlolleric b. Thorn
Otto Stockmann Thale a. H.
Heinrich Wolf in Hof in Bayern.
Martin Lund aus Kjetsch Baden)
Peter Glasmacher Crefeld (Rheinland)
Paul Kappler Körner i/ Thüringen,
Hermann Polland. Battgendorf i/ Thüringen,

SIGNATURES OF WOUNDED GERMAN PRISONERS TO TESTIMONIAL MENTIONED IN LETTER OF DECEMBER 28TH.

58. CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM HOME

Convalescent Camp, A. P. O. 780,
A. E. F., France,
January 4, 1918.

I appreciate more than I can state the kind Christmas greetings from Brother Halvorson and the members of the church council acting on behalf of the congregation. The greetings did not reach me until a week after Christmas, but they were just as welcome and just as much appreciated. The beautiful message of Christmas, thanks be to God, does not change with passing years or passing conditions. The Gospel has always been the same and will always remain the same.

In addition to the weekly letters which I have sent regularly, and in one of which about a month before Christmas, I included Christmas greetings to the congregation, I also sent a cablegram addressed to the congregation five days before Christmas. It contained merely the two words "Christmas Greetings." I hope this reached you. I suppose it really was not necessary to send it, but I wanted all of you to know that my thoughts were with you during the celebration of that great festival.

59. A CHAPLAIN OF THE GERMAN ARMY

Convalescent Camp, A. P. O. 780,
A. E. F., France,
January 11, 1919.

A few days ago we were surprised when a train-load of prisoners came into our camp. It brought us four hundred wounded German soldiers, about twenty-five German officers and forty-two German nurses. These were all from two German base hospitals, which had been located in Belgium. When the armistice was signed the German army, including the hospitals, was given a certain number of days in which to evacuate. The train from Germany which should have taken these two base hospitals back into Germany did not arrive in time, so they were left behind and were taken prisoners by the Allies when the date specified by the armistice had expired and the Allies occupied the territory. It seems that the Germans expected that they would be sent from Belgium by the Allies into that part of Germany which is now occupied by the Allies, but instead of that the Allies decided to send all the patients, medical officers, and nurses in both of these German hospitals down here. One of the officers is a German army chaplain, who in civil life is pastor of one of the best known churches in Berlin. The name of the church is St. George's Church, and it is right in the center of the city. Many of you undoubtedly read the name of this church in the press dispatches, as it is being used as a fortress during

the trouble which is taking place in Berlin at the present time. I had a long talk with this chaplain the other day.

Whenever any of these German medical officers or chaplains desire to go to any part of the camp or to any other base hospital in the camp, they must be accompanied by one of our officers, as the place where they are kept is strictly guarded. The other day, while I was accompanying the chaplain whom I have referred to, he gave me the silver cross which is his emblem of office as chaplain in the German army. He was not obliged to give this up to any one and I told him so, but he said some of their personal belongings had been lost, owing to the fact that many persons wanted souvenirs, and he was afraid someone, even tho they were not authorized to do so, might confiscate this beautiful cross.

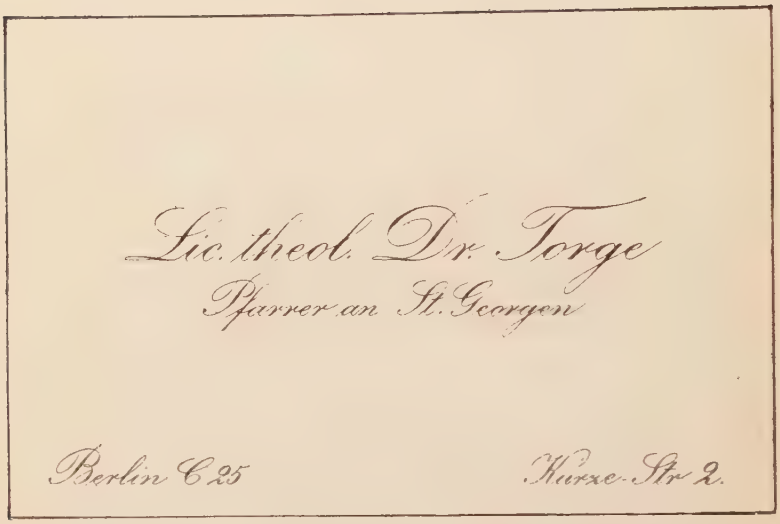
I have a number of German souvenirs, which I have picked up on the battle-fields and other places at the front, but I did not feel right about accepting this cross. I told him, "I am sorry, but I do not feel that it would be right for you to give that away. I know you must value it very highly, and I am sure you do not like to part with it, therefore I should advise you to keep it yourself."

He answered, "Yes, I do value it highly, and I should very much like to keep it, but I am afraid it will be impossible for me to retain it in my possession until I get back home. I should very much dislike to have anything which I consider so sacred taken away from me by someone who possibly will not consider it sacred. It is because that I know

you, being a chaplain, will consider it sacred, that I want to present it to you, and I want you always to keep it for yourself."

I still hesitated and asked him if he would not let me pay him the price which it was worth. He smiled and said, "Why, Chaplain, you have never had enough money and you will never have enough money to pay me for that cross. I should never think of selling it, and I should never think of accepting anything for it, but I really want you to accept it in order that it may be retained by someone who considers it sacred."

It is not, of course, contrary to army regulations for me to accept a gift of this kind. I accepted it and shall bring it back with me. In addition to this cross he also gave one of his caps, as he had two. This cap is the uniform cap worn by other German army officers. In front it has the two silver buttons or badges which the Germans call "kokaden." The upper one of these buttons is the same as worn by all German officers, and the lower one is the one which indicates which section of Germany the officer is from. In this case the lower badge is black and white and indicates that the wearer is from Prussia. The top button has the red, white, and black colors of the German Empire. These badges are worn by both soldiers and officers, but in the case of soldiers the badges or buttons are of painted tin, while the badges for officers are raised and are of silver instead of being flat and of tin. Such of our officers and soldiers as have seen this cross and cap have stated that they were the most valuable and beautiful German army souvenirs they have seen thus far.



CARD OF CHAPLAIN TORGE OF THE GERMAN ARMY, WHO WAS BROUGHT TO OUR CAMP WHEN TWO GERMAN FIELD HOSPITALS WERE CAPTURED. HE INSISTED THAT I KEEP THE BIG SILVER CROSS WHICH HE WORE ON HIS UNIFORM.

60. THE FUNERAL OF AN AMERICAN ARMY NURSE

Convalescent Camp, A. P. O. 780,
A. E. F., France,
January 18, 1919.

Yesterday I officiated, for the first time in over a year, at the funeral of a woman, and for the first time in my life I officiated at the funeral of a woman who was buried with military escort and military honors. This funeral did not take place in this camp of which I am the chaplain, but it was the funeral of one of the nurses at one of the ten base hospitals not very far away from here. I had been sent for some time ago by the chaplain of the base hospital with which she was connected, who asked me to call her because he learned that she was of the same faith as mine, and he knew that she was not expected to live. She was a devout Christian young woman. After speaking with her for some time I inquired if she desired to receive Holy Communion, and she told me she was very anxious to receive it. That was about two weeks ago. After that I called seven or eight times, and each time I conducted a short devotion which seemed to please her very much. The last two times I called she was not conscious, but before that she fully realized her condition and was entirely prepared in a spiritual way. Her ailment was spinal meningitis.

At the funeral today the American flag covered her coffin, the regulation escort of officers, nurses

and soldiers accompanied her remains to the grave, and after I had read the committal service a bugler sounded "taps." Before going to the military cemetery, I conducted a short service at the hospital and preached a funeral sermon.

For some time it has been contrary to regulations to mention the names of casualties, as the first information will come to her parents thru the War Department at Washington, but I am of course at liberty to say that I do not think any of you are acquainted with her. She was not from Wisconsin, and I had never known her until I was called upon to visit her after she became seriously ill.

P. S. Some time ago I stated that the prospects of this entire camp being abandoned in the very near future and all of us getting back to the United States very soon were very bright. I also mentioned that one day fifteen hundred were sent back from this camp to the United States on a few hours' notice. We have everything ready to send all the others home as soon as we receive orders from those higher in authority to do so. These orders may come at any time, but we can never be positive about anything. The general expectation, however, is that we shall return very soon.

61. STRIKING TENTS

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
January 23, 1919.

We have now actually commenced taking down the tents at this camp, so we are more convinced than ever that we are actually going to move in the near future. For some time we have been sending convalescent patients from here back to the States and have received none to take the places of those who left.

This camp is composed of three hundred and one tents, each of which is twenty feet wide and thirty feet long and has a capacity of sixteen men, making a capacity of four thousand eight hundred and sixteen men. We have actually had over four thousand eight hundred and fifty here at one time. In addition to the tents there are also a number of frame barracks, used for mess halls, etc. I have not included any of the base hospitals, as they are not a part of this camp. There are ten complete base hospitals near here. It is no small job to take down and pack up all these tents, but the boys are certainly not going to loaf on the job—that is a sure thing!

The tents will all be down as soon as orders are received permitting us to send out all of the convalescent patients, or in a very short time after the patients have left, and that will not be long.

62. MORE BOYS LEAVE FOR THE U. S. A.

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
February 1, 1919.

Last Sunday was one of the most eventful days in the history of our camp, which is the largest convalescent camp in France. On our parade ground were assembled about 2,000 convalescent patients, one-half of whom were from this camp and the other half had come here that day from the ten base hospitals which are located only a short distance away. These 2,000 soldiers were about the happiest soldiers that I ever saw in my life. They had just received orders to assemble on our parade ground, in order to be grouped according to the division to which they had belonged before they had become patients, and after this grouping had been completed, to proceed in charge of officers to trains, which were waiting for them less than a mile from here, and these trains were headed in the direction of "the good old U. S. A." I am using this expression because that is the expression which the boys themselves always use. Nearly all the boys were wearing the insignia of their divisions. I noticed that the two divisions which had the largest number were the 32nd and 42nd Divisions. I suppose most of you know that I wear the insignia of the 32nd Division myself. It is a red arrow with a bar thru it and is worn on the left shoulder.

The exodus which I have mentioned took place after 11 a. m. I had preached a farewell sermon to the soldiers from this camp earlier in the morning

that same day. I suppose it is unnecessary to explain that a farewell sermon in this instance meant that they were leaving me and not that I was leaving them.

The soldiers who left here will not go immediately to a base port and get on a ship, but will go to what is known as an embarkation center at Le Mans, which is approximately 100 miles east of the seacoast, at a point midway between two seaports, at which troops finally embark. We do not know how long they will be kept at Le Mans. It will depend upon how many are there ahead of them waiting for transportation. It will also depend upon how long it will take to put the boys thru certain other processes which are necessary. This is where they get new clothes, in order that they may look spick and span when they return to their homes. Before they are put into their new clothes there is another process which they are put thru. This is a peculiar examination. Now, some of you are going to smile. It is the examination for the presence of "cooties." You see the boys explain it this way: Every American soldier is anxious to take along some souvenir of France. Of course, it seems a pity that the Government will not allow them to take along a few samples of nice, interesting little "cooties," but "pigs is pigs," and "cooties is cooties", and "regulations is regulations," and there you are. Thru the "cootie machine" they go, and then into their new uniforms, and then they're ready to join the grand army of those who have commenced singing the beautiful and enchanting strains of "Home, Sweet Home."

63. FAREWELL TO THE TENTED CITY

A. E. F., A. P. O. 780, France,
February 8, 1919.

The famous tented city of soldiers, the largest convalescent camp in France, is a thing of the past as far as tents and patients are concerned. Where only a few days ago there were 300 tents, each of which would accommodate 16 soldiers, and where there have been as many as 4,700 men assembled in this camp at one time, there is now not a single yard of white canvas or a single tent visible, and all that may be seen is a field of black earth. If you attempt to walk across this field it will at once become alive with a big flock of great black crows which have assembled to get rations where nearly 5,000 soldiers once stood in mess line. There are a few of us who are still left on the ground. The faithful few are composed of the medical corps men and the officers connected with it, and, last but not least, the man who holds the distinction of being the only chaplain ever assigned to duty in this famous place. Some time or other he will visit your fair city and appear before you in person. He hopes you will raise the flag to the top of the pole on the day when his train arrives, and that all of you will attend the first sermon which he preaches after his return. He has now commenced worrying about the style of sermon which he must preach. He realizes full well that he will have to change his style of preaching.

You see the boys have sometimes referred to my sermons as "a heavy barrage of high explosives," and of course that would never do in a consecrated church. I suppose some of you will think I am getting almost sacrilegious, but please try to remember that I have not had an opportunity of preaching in a single church since I left the United States a year ago. I hope, however, that all of you will believe that I have sought to impress my boys every Sunday with just as serious lessons as I ever did in my pulpit back home. I am convinced of the fact that all the boys have realized this.

I suppose you will be asking, "Well, what is he doing now, and when is he coming home?" In answer I would say that those of us who are left here are waiting for orders. We have become the best little waiters in the world. We have also learned the beautiful secret of patience. Patient waiters, that's us! In the meantime, we are all excitement, and we are asking the same question which you are asking. Only, I believe that we are much more interested in the answer than you are, and even at that I have an idea that you are quite anxious to see us. Seriously, however, I would say that I shall write you immediately within one hour after I have a definite answer, and I shall go and mail that letter immediately at the nearest army post office.

64. ORDERS TO LEAVE FOR GERMANY

Convalescent Camp, A. P. O. 780,
A. E. F., France,
February 20, 1919.

I have received orders to return to my regiment and must leave at once for Germany.

The work at the convalescent camp is finished. All the patients have been sent away. There are only five medical officers and fewer than 100 soldiers of the medical detachment left here now, and these expect orders to return to the U. S. very soon, but have not received them yet. I thought that I should receive orders to go back with them, but an order came from general headquarters detaching me from service with the convalescent camp and ordering me to report for duty with my regiment, in the Army of Occupation.

I have received a letter from my regiment which says that the regiment will in all probability return to the United States soon. My regiment is now on the east side of the Rhine, northeast of the city of Coblenz.

Hereafter my address will be: 127th Infantry, A. P. O. 734, American Expeditionary Forces.

65. IN THE CITY OF METZ, ALSACE-LORRAINE

Metz, Alsace-Lorraine,
Washington's Birthday,
February 22, 1919.

I am writing this short letter in the "Bahnhof" or railroad station at Metz, Alsace-Lorraine. I arrived here this evening and must change trains here. My next stop is Coblenz, where I must change trains again before I reach my regiment.

RAILWAY STATION, METZ, ALSACE-LORRAINE.

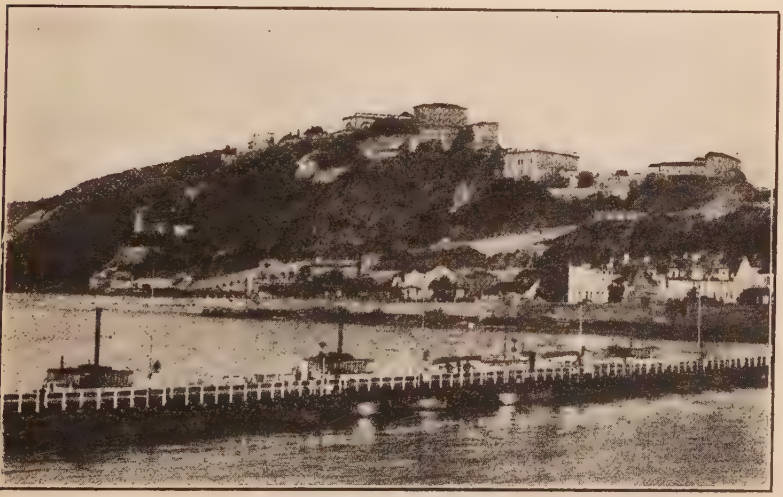
66. CROSSING THE RHINE—BACK TO MY REGIMENT

Hdqrs. 127th Infantry, U. S. Army,
A. E. F., A. P. O. 734,
Selters, Germany, March 1, 1919.

The last letter I sent to you I wrote a week ago today, while I was seated in the railway station in the city of Metz, Alsace-Lorraine. I caught the first train out of there for the city of Coblenz, Germany: It was exceptionally fortunate for me that I could make the trip by daylight. The journey was up thru the beautiful valley of the Moselle. The scenery which I saw was some of the most interesting I have seen in my life. This was my first journey on a German train. No fares whatever are collected by the German conductors from those who are in the uniform of American soldiers or officers. We passed thru the city of Treves, or Trier, as it is sometimes called, on the east border of Luxembourg, but I did not get off the train here. I went direct to Coblenz, where I had to change trains again; and as the train I was to take to my destination did not leave for some time, I had an opportunity to see a considerable part of this latter city.

In leaving Coblenz I crossed the Rhine and went in a northeasterly direction about thirty kilometers to report to the commanding officer of my regiment. I do not know whether or not you are aware of it, but the 32nd Division, of which my regiment is a

COBLENZ, GERMANY.



THE HISTORIC GERMAN FORTRESS "EHRENBREITSTEIN," WHERE I CROSSED THE RHINE.

part, is one of the three American divisions on the east side of the Rhine. The only other American divisions which have crossed the Rhine are the 1st and 2nd Divisions.

The boys gave me a rousing welcome. I enclose one of the announcements for the services which I conduct on next Sunday, in two villages occupied by my regiment. My regiment is scattered in several villages.

Munderbach, where I preach at noon, is about forty kilometers northeast of Coblenz, and Selters, where I preach in the evening, is about thirty-five kilometers northeast of Coblenz. A kilometer is five-eighths of an English mile.

All the villages occupied by my regiment are in the district of Westerwald, Prussia.

67. THE LAND OF TANNENBAUM

127th Infantry, A. P. O. 734, A. E. F.,
Selters, Germany, March 8, 1919.

I do not know whether or not this section of Germany has more "Tannenbaum" than other sections, but the hills and valleys around here are just covered with these trees. I imagine it is exceptionally beautiful here in the summer time, when the grass is green and the flowers are in bloom.

I think I mentioned in a previous letter that our regiment is occupying seven villages. In reality there are nine villages, but two of them are so small that they are not listed on the map. One day I rode on horseback to eight of the villages occupied by my division. My billet is in Selters, where the regimental headquarters is located and where the following companies are billeted: E, F, G, H, and the Supply Company and the Medical Detachment. Company M is in Munderbach, Headquarters Company is in the two little villages of Ruckeroth and Goddard, Company L is in Schenkelberg, Company G is in Freirachdorf, Company I is in Rossbach, Company B is in Hartenfels, and Companies A, D, K, and the Machine Gun Company are in Herschbach.

Last Sunday I preached in two of the villages, and next Sunday I shall preach in three villages. I shall also preach in three villages the following Sunday. I shall make all these trips on horseback.

SELTERS, WESTERWALD, GERMANY, WHERE MY REGIMENT HAD ITS HEADQUARTERS.

HARTENFELS, GERMANY. ONE OF THE VILLAGES OCCUPIED BY OUR REGIMENT.

LEAVING SELTERS, GERMANY, ON A SUNDAY MORNING ON HORSEBACK TO PREACH IN SEVERAL OF THE VILLAGES OCCUPIED BY MY REGIMENT.

The air is pure and bracing, and those rides over hills and thru valleys, along winding country roads, over small streams and thru great forests, are exceptionally interesting; but be they ever so beautiful and interesting, they are not so interesting to us as some streets which those of you who hear this letter

VISITING COMPANY "M" ON DUTY IN THE EXTREME OUTPOSTS OF THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION.

will have a chance to look at just as soon as your services are over today.

The two largest villages I have mentioned are Selters and Herschbach. They have a civilian population of about twelve hundred each. The quaintest and most interesting village is Hartenfels. On the top of a high hill there is a large high tower of an ancient and ruined fortress.

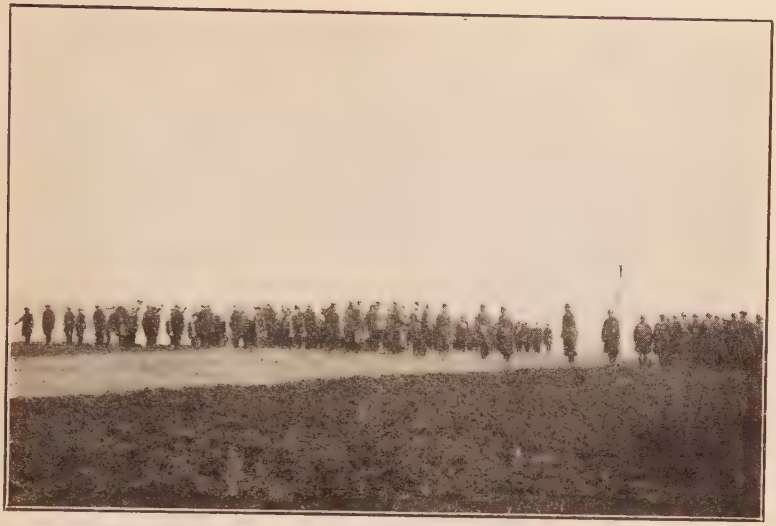
Whenever the weather permits I conduct open-air services. At other times I preach in the company mess halls or any other place where it is convenient for the soldiers to assemble. The attendance has been very good.

68. GENERAL PERSHING REVIEWS OUR DIVISION

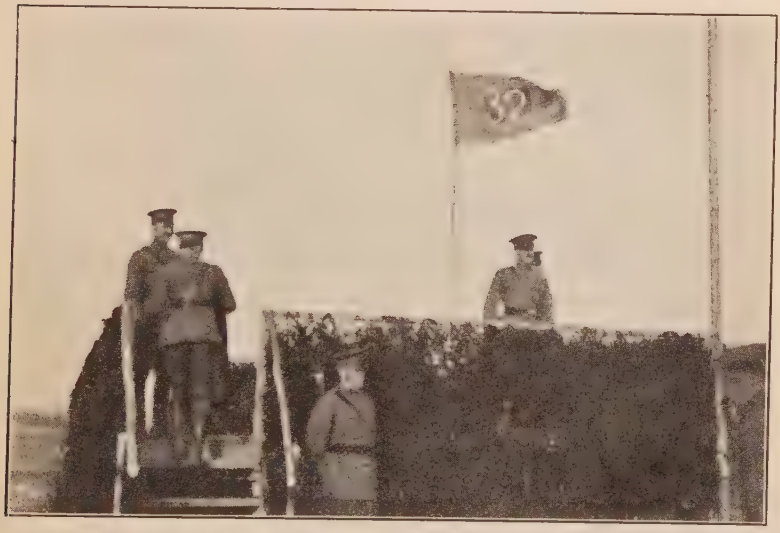
127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
Selters, Germany, March 15, 1919.

This morning we marched down to Dierdorf, where our regiment and the other units of the 32nd Division were inspected by General Pershing. Previous to leaving here we received strict orders about having our uniforms and equipment in first-class condition, and after we reached the field, where the inspection took place, we had to polish our shoes and brush the dust off our clothes. All of us wore our steel helmets, but these also had been oiled, so that they would look as well as possible.

At noon General Pershing and his staff came dashing up on horseback. We all stood rigid and at "Attention." When he had made a circle about the division on horseback he and his staff officers dismounted and started on a very brisk walk, inspecting not only each regiment and company but every officer and man in the entire division. I have seen many officers inspect troops, but I never saw one who walked so fast or worked so fast as General Pershing. He is charged with vigor and vim and military precision. He passed directly in front of me and looked me "square in the eye," and I looked him "square in the eye," and he gave my uniform the "once over" in about one-millionth part of a second, but I was mighty glad that for



INSPECTION OF 32ND DIVISION BY GENERAL PERSHING AT DIERDORF, GERMANY.



REVIEW OF 32ND DIVISION BY GENERAL PERSHING AT DIERDORF, GERMANY.

once in my life I was standing as I should stand, and all the buttons on my trench coat buttoned up and my helmet on straight and my shoes polished and my face shaved, etc., etc., but even at that, I was mighty glad when he had gotten past me, because I was afraid that something might happen and I might forget myself and disturb the perfect setting of my helmet, or otherwise muss myself up.

Well, after we had stood at "Attention" and the general had inspected us, the entire division marched by him in review, our regiment being at the head.

After the review the division was assembled in mass formation as close together as possible, and General Pershing delivered an address. He complimented the work of our division during the war and stated that inasmuch as we were soon going home it would in all probability be the last opportunity he would have of speaking to the entire division assembled at one time. He did not tell us the exact date when we shall leave here, or when we shall get on board ship, but I presume that by the time this letter reaches you the date will have been decided and will have been published in the Milwaukee papers from information furnished by the War Department at Washington.

69. ONE MONTH BEFORE LEAVING GERMANY

127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
Selters, Germany, March 22, 1919.

I take it for granted that this letter will reach you just before Easter Sunday, and I therefore send you greetings for a most happy and most blessed Easter!

I am thinking now of the many Easter festivals which we have celebrated together. I remember well the beautiful floral decorations in the interior of the church. I remember the early service at sunrise and the chief service, when the members of the confirmation class kneeled at the altar to receive the Holy Communion for the first time. I remember the children's service in the Bay View chapel in the afternoon, and the children's service in the church in the evening. I remember the faces and the greetings of you who were there, and I am wondering how many of these faces and greetings I shall miss when I return—I mean how many there are of those to whom I preached who, instead of hearing the message of a risen Saviour as it is proclaimed from the pulpit, have left this earth to experience that resurrection which shall take place when the last trumpet shall sound!

Easter Sunday last year, I was in France, and I conducted five or six Easter services for the boys of my regiment and gave Holy Communion to those who desired it. I do not know where I shall be this Easter Sunday. I know I shall be with my regiment,

and I know I shall conduct Easter services for my regiment, but I do not know whether we shall then be in the Army of Occupation, in Germany, where we are now, or whether we shall be on our way from here to France, or whether we shall have arrived in France. We are getting ready to leave Germany. We have received no definite orders about the exact date when our regiment shall leave here, but the general impression seems to be that it will be between the 15th and 20th of April. Now, do not misunderstand me; this is not the date we expect to get on board a ship, but it is about the date we expect to get on a train here in Germany and commence our journey toward Brest, France. It will take us several days on a troop train to go from here to Brest. How long we shall be kept at Brest before we get on board a ship we do not know, but we are hoping that it will not be long. I shall, of course, write you as soon as we get any definite orders as to the time for leaving here and shall continue writing my weekly letters until my return.

In the meantime I am wondering whether I shall be conducting Easter services this Easter here in Germany, or on a troop train on the way to Brest, France.

But the Easter message will be the same. It will be the same whether it is preached here or on the train, or at some point in France. Thanks be to God, the Easter message has never changed and never will change!

P. S. I send you two announcements of my services tomorrow. I preach at three services for my regiment, but only two had been arranged for when the announcement was printed.

70. CHURCH SERVICES IN FRONT OF THE BURGOMEISTER'S OFFICE, SELTERS, GERMANY

127th Infantry, A. E. F., A. P. O. 734,
Selters, Germany, March 30, 1919.

I inclose a picture which was taken in Selters, Germany, of one of the three services which I conducted last Sunday.

The building in the center of the picture is the village "burgomeister's" (mayor's) office. Over the door may be seen the Prussian coat of arms and the special insignia used to indicate the office of the "burgomeister."

The picture was taken while I was offering the prayer. That is why all of us are standing with bowed heads.

My chaplain's flag is always placed where I am conducting a service and may be seen in this picture. Back of the flag is our regimental band. Between my flag and the "burgomeister's" sign is a row of officers. Just back of the band you notice four or five German boys from the village. The soldiers in the group are from the 2nd Battalion of my regiment. Not all who were present at the service are shown on this picture.

On the right may be seen a portion of one of the two churches in Selters. Our regimental headquarters is located just across the street from this church.

OUTDOOR MILITARY CHURCH SERVICES. SELTERS, GERMANY.
MARCH 23, 1919.

71. A FEW HOURS IN ITALY

At the foothills of the Alps,
April 5, 1919.

This week I have made a trip in which I crossed the Italian border and spent one day in a little Italian village.

I have seen some very old and historic places, among which was a monument erected by Emperor Augustus before the time of Christ. This was up in the Alpine mountains near the Italian border and was erected to commemorate the victory of the Roman emperor over all the Alpine tribes.

The road I travelled on was constructed by order of Napoleon I.

I also visited the ancient Saracen town of Eze, high up on a mountain peak, and Mont Agel, said to be the finest natural stronghold in the world.

I have pictures of these interesting places.

My trip was very hurried, but I tried to see as many places of interest as possible. I intend to make a one-day trip on the Rhine before we leave Germany. I expect to make that trip the first part of next week and shall write a letter about it immediately upon my return.

According to present indications our division will leave Germany between the 15th and 20th of April for Brest, France. As soon as I learn the probable date of our arrival in and departure from Brest I shall let you know.

72. ALONG THE RHINE AND ON THE RHINE—THE COLOGNE CATHEDRAL, THE CASTLE ON THE RHINE, AND THE LORELEI

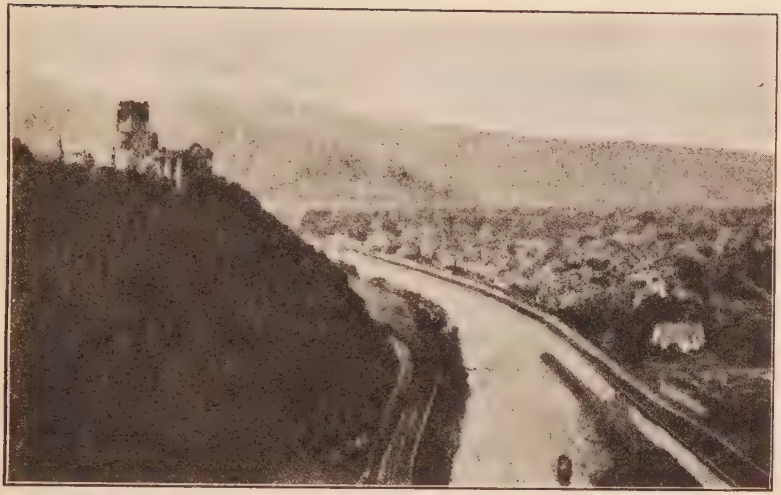
127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
Selters, Germany, April 12, 1919.

I spent two days this week in sightseeing. It was the last opportunity I had of being away from the regiment before we leave for home. After this date no officer or enlisted man is allowed to be absent from the organization.

The morning of the first day (Thursday) I spent in the ancient city of Trier. I was in the oldest church in Germany. This city also has several of the best preserved buildings from the time of the Romans.

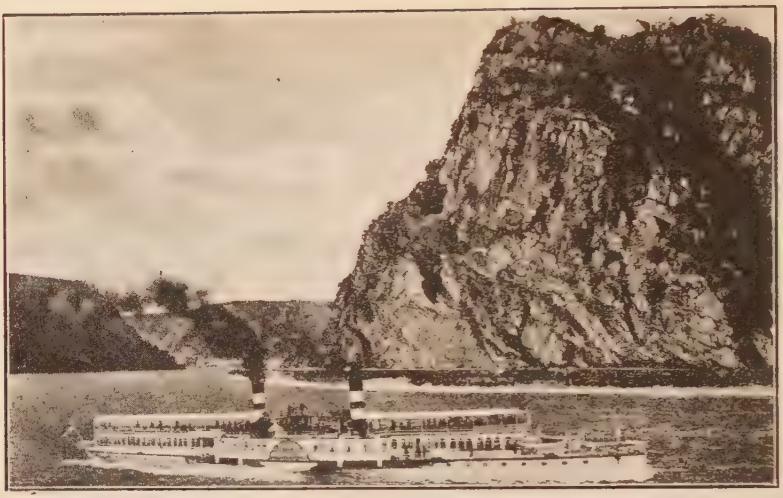
I left Trier early the same forenoon for Coblenz, where I caught a train for Cologne, or Koln, according to the German pronunciation. The journey from Coblenz as far as Bonn was along the Rhine. I saw one of the castles of the former kaiser and a number of other interesting and historic places. At Bonn I saw the famous Bonn University. From Bonn to Cologne I went by street car. I had to have a special pass to go to Cologne, because this territory is occupied by the English Army of Occupation instead of the American Army of Occupation.

At Cologne I went immediately to the cathedral.



LAHNECK CASTLE ON THE RHINE.

STOLZENFELS CASTLE ON THE RHINE, ORIGINALLY BUILT IN 13TH CENTURY. DESTROYED IN 1689. REBUILT IN 1833 BY FREDERICK WILLIAM IV.



THE LORELEI, A BASALT ROCK ON THE RHINE IMMORTALIZED THROUGH HEINE'S FOLK SONG, "ICH WEISS NICHT, WAS SOLL ES BEDEUTEN." THE BEND IN THE RIVER GIVES RISE TO AN EXTRAORDINARY ECHO WHICH CAN REPEAT ITSELF TWELVE TIMES.

COLOGNE, GERMANY, AND THE FAMOUS CATHEDRAL.

I suppose all of you have heard that this edifice is not only the most beautiful church in Germany, but that it is claimed by many to be one of the most beautiful and perfect Gothic cathedrals in the world. Although it was late in the evening, I went inside. A Lenten service was being conducted. I heard a part of the sermon, but could not hear all of it because I was in the rear of the edifice. That same night I returned to Coblenz, or rather, the train did not arrive in Coblenz until early the next morning; but instead of going to sleep I caught a boat for a trip on the Rhine in the opposite direction, that is, going south. Every hour was precious, and I could not afford to spend any in sleep. I wanted to see as much as possible, because that same evening I had to get back to my regiment.

I have a list of all the places I saw on this boat-trip on the Rhine, together with a history and legend connected with each place, but have not the time to describe them to you now, and besides, I realize that such a description would be too long to be read at a Sunday church service. This is the most interesting trip on the Rhine which it is possible to make. I saw fourteen of the celebrated "Castles on the Rhine." There is an interesting legend connected with every one of the fourteen. I also have a picture of each. In addition to the old castles, I also saw the "Lorelei." This is the famous rock or mountain on the banks of the Rhine about which one of the most noteworthy poems has been written. It is the one place on the Rhine which all tourists are most anxious to see.

I returned to my regiment the same evening (last night).

Today is Saturday. This afternoon I spoke to a number of groups of my boys. This is the way I greeted them:

"Boys, do you know that tomorrow is Sunday and that it will in all probability be our *last* Sunday in Germany?"

Here is the way they replied:

"Say, Chaplain, you just bet we know it! You want to know if we are coming to church tomorrow. Well, don't you worry. We'll be there. You just bet we will."

And so I don't worry about tomorrow. I know they will be there.

Of course it *may* not be our last Sunday in Germany, but I feel quite positive that it *will* be. The 32nd Division (our division) will commence leaving Germany the 16th. The 16th is next Wednesday. The entire division will not leave the same day, but we think the greater part of the division will have left here before the following Sunday.

From here we go to Brest, France. We do not expect to be kept in Brest very long before we embark, possibly not more than a couple of days.

I shall write you another letter next week.

73. LAST LETTER FROM GERMANY

127th Infantry, A. E. F., A. P. O. 734,
Selters, Germany, April 15, 1919.

We expect to leave Selters, Germany, April 18th, (Good Friday).

We expect to reach Brest, France, April 22nd.

This means that we expect to be on the train traveling between here and Brest on Easter Sunday, but I shall of course attempt to have some kind of an Easter service on the train.

This is the last opportunity I have of mailing any letter before we leave Germany. If I have an opportunity of sending a letter from Brest I shall most certainly do so.

We do not know what date we leave Brest for the U. S., or what ship we embark on, or what port in the U. S. we are going to. We do not think that we shall be kept waiting in Brest long.

Last Sunday was Palm Sunday—our last Sunday in Germany. I conducted four services, all of which were well attended.

74. CHURCH SERVICES IN BOX CARS ON A MOVING TROOP TRAIN, EN ROUTE FROM GERMANY TO BREST, FRANCE

127th Infantry, 32nd Division,
A. E. F., France,
Brest, France, April 22, 1919.

We have at last commenced our journey toward home.

I am now in a tent in a camp just ouside of Brest, France. We reached here yesterday afternoon, after travelling from Germany on troop trains four nights and three and a half days.

Our regiment used three trains, about one thousand enlisted men and officers being on each train. The first train left Germany on Good Friday at 6 o'clock in the morning, the second at noon, and the third at 6 o'clock in the evening.

Those of us who were on the first train had to leave Selters, Germany, the evening before and travel by auto trucks to Engers, Germany, where we arrived the same evening and entrained immediately, altho the train did not leave until the following morning.

I stated in a previous letter to you that there was a possibility that I might be travelling on a troop train between Germany and Brest, on Easter Sunday, and that is exactly what I was doing on Easter Sunday. I nevertheless conducted twelve Easter services. I preached Easter sermons in

twelve different box cars to my boys while the train was running at its regular speed.

I do not know how many days we shall be kept at this camp before we embark on a ship for the United States, but the probability is it will be only a few days.

The entire 32nd Division has not reached here as yet. Our regiment was the first of the four infantry regiments in the division to reach here.

The artillery regiments had been here a few days when we arrived and will leave here before we do.

75. LAST LETTER FROM FRANCE

127th Infantry, A. E. F.,
Brest, France, April 24, 1919.

The colonel of our regiment told me last night that a portion of the regiment, including the colonel and his staff officers and two and a half companies, would embark on the S. S. "Cap Finisterre" this evening or tomorrow morning (April 25th). This is not a large boat and will not accommodate more than 800. It was built by the Germans for traffic between Hamburg and South America. I am informed that it will take about ten days for us to cross the Atlantic on this ship if the weather is favorable.

There are some more ships in the harbor here and the troops are loaded on them as soon as inspections are completed, so the remaining part of the regiment may leave as soon as we do and may get across before we do. We do not know whether the "Cap Finisterre" will leave tomorrow (Friday, April 25th) or not, but we know that we shall get on board tonight or tomorrow morning.

I am writing this letter and mailing it in the army post office here in the camp at Brest, thinking that possibly we may be delayed and that the letter may get on another ship and may get across before we do.

Our boat goes to Hoboken, N. J.

76. ON THE S. S. "CAP FINISTERRE"— BACK TO THE GOOD OLD U. S. A.

Hdqrs. 127th Infantry, 32nd Division,
Camp Merritt, N. J., May 5, 1919.

We sailed from Brest, France, Friday afternoon, April 25th, at three o'clock, and landed in New York today at noon. After being served with a light lunch we boarded a train for Camp Merritt, N. J., where we are located at the present time. We do not know how long we shall remain in this camp. A large number of the officers and men of our regiment are not from Wisconsin, but are replacements which were sent to us to fill up our ranks after our original Wisconsin boys had been killed or wounded. These replacements from other states will leave us here at Camp Merritt. As soon as I learn when we go from here I shall inform you immediately, but I think it is safe to say that we shall be here at least a week, and the probability is that it will be longer.

I told you in the last letter I wrote from Brest that the first part of our regiment, including our colonel and his staff and two and a half of our companies would sail on the U. S. S. "Cap Finisterre," and that the colonel had informed me that I would go as a member of his staff. The commanding general of our brigade, the 64th Brigade of the 32nd Division, and his staff were also on this ship. This brigade is composed of the 127th and 128th Infantry Regiments, and has been designated by the

CHURCH SERVICES AT SEA. PREACHING.

French as the Brigade "Les Terribles," or the Terrible Brigade. We won this name when we were fighting together with the French in the Soissons sector and captured the village of Juvigny.

We were at sea two Sundays, and I conducted services on the deck on both of these days. Our regimental band was with us and furnished music at the services. In addition to my own boys the ship's crew and a large number of others who came on the same ship were in attendance. In accordance with the regulations of the United States Navy the Church pennant was hoisted above the Stars and Stripes just before the service commenced and lowered as the service had concluded. This was the first time we had ever seen a flag above the Stars and Stripes, and this is the only flag which is ever placed over our national colors. I have pictures which were taken on board at both services and shall show them to you when I return.

Quite a number of those on board were seasick. Please don't misunderstand this. I don't want you to think they were seasick during the church services, or that the church services made them seasick, but as a matter of fact they were seasick. Right here I must make another explanation. Please notice that I use the pronoun they and not we, but believe me I was not doing any bragging on board ship. Whenever any one asked me if I had been seasick yet I simply shook my head and knocked wood. I don't know whether or not the shaking of the head and knocking on wood had anything to do with keeping me from getting seasick, but now that

CHURCH SERVICES AT SEA, READING THE SCRIPTURE LESSON.

OUR LAST GLIMPSE OF FRANCE, VIEW OF HARBOR AT BREST, TAKEN FROM THE DECK OF OUR TRANSPORT AFTER WE HAD WEIGHED ANCHOR APRIL 25TH, 1919.

it is all over and I am seated on land instead of walking the deck at sea I take great pride in informing the world that I was not seasick, and I am not knocking wood now, because believe me it will be a long, long time before Father Neptune, or whoever the old gentleman is with the whiskers who stirs up the sea and the insides of all those who travel thereon, will ever have a chance to do anything to me. You will please notice that I am trying to be funny. Probably this also needs some explanation. I have not been drinking; but if anyone should ask you the reason, please inform the world that we have returned to the "good old U. S. A.," and I don't think anyone is going to blame any of us for feeling good and happy.

THE "CAP FINISTERRE," ON WHICH WE RETURNED TO THE U. S.

G. H. Q.

American Expeditionary Forces

Citation Orders France, June 3, 1919.

No. 4.

1. The following named officers and enlisted men of the American Expeditionary Forces are cited for gallantry in action and are entitled to wear a silver star on the Victory Medal Ribbon, as prescribed by Paragraph 1, G. O. 75, c. s., these headquarters:

EXTRACT

Chaplain Gustave Stearns, 127th Inf.

For gallantry in action near Juvigny, France, 1 September, 1918, in burying the dead under heavy shell fire.

By Command of General Pershing:

JAMES G. HARBORD,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:
Robert C. Davis,
Adjutant General.

127TH INFANTRY, 32ND DIVISION AT CAMP MERRITT, N. J., UPON RETURN FROM GERMANY AND FRANCE

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